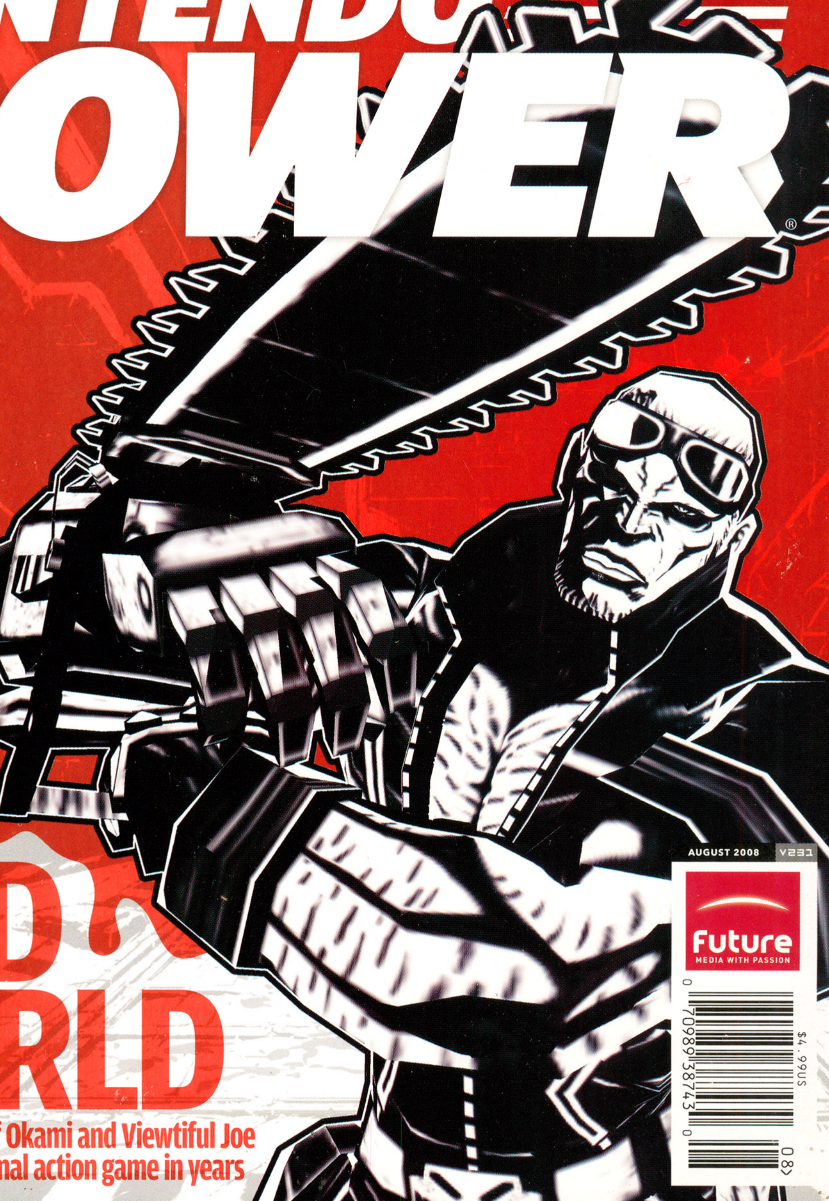
20TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

NINTENDO POWER®

- CASTLEVANIA JUDGMENT
- MEGA MAN 9
- STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS
- SONIC UNLEASHED
- TOMB RAIDER: UNDERWORLD
- PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FALLEN KING
- MARIO SUPER SLUGGERS
- WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2009
- SHAUN WHITE SNOWBOARDING



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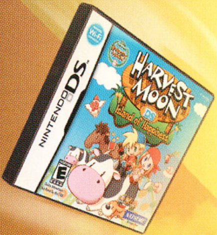
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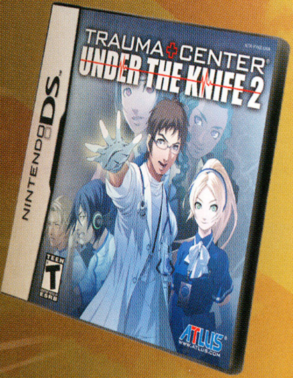
Harvest Moon DS
Island of Happiness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TRAUMA CENTER
UNDER THE KNIFE 2
ATLUS

Wii
Disney · PIXAR
WALL·E
THQ

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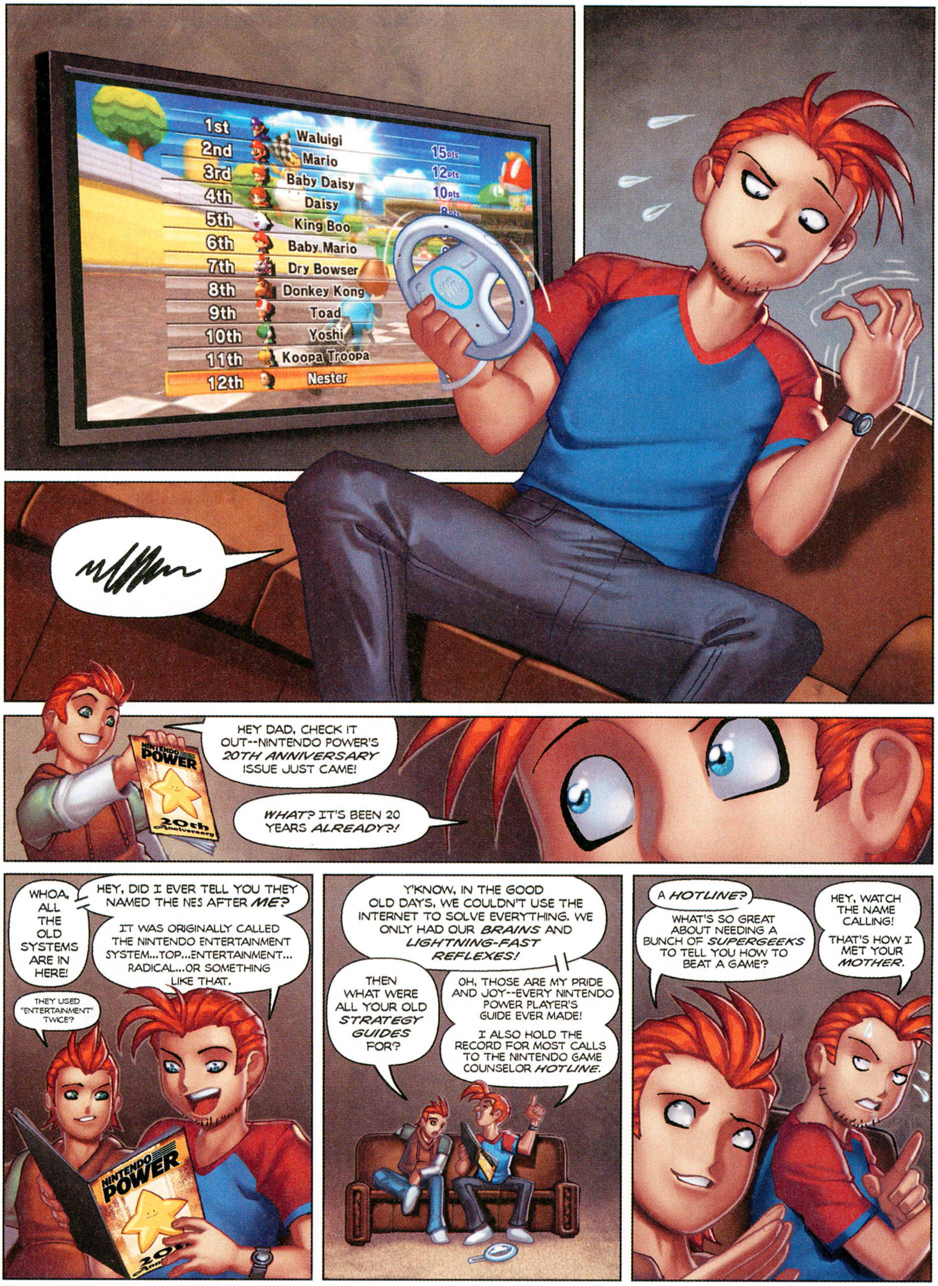
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4th Daisy 10pts
5th King Boo
6th Baby Mario
7th Dry Bowser
8th Donkey Kong
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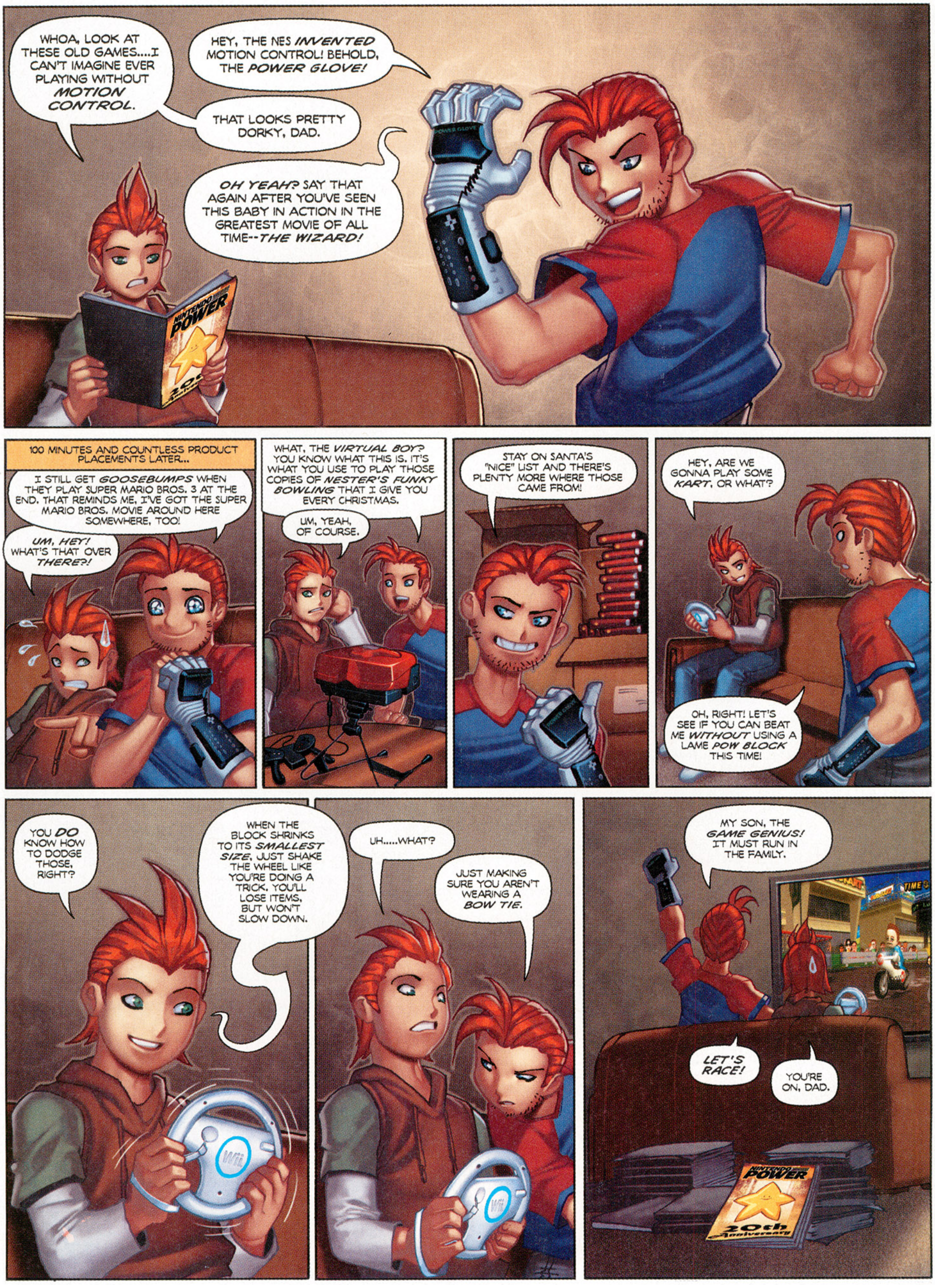
10th Yoshi
11th Koopa Troopa
12th Nester
HEY DAD, CHECK IT OUT--NINTENDO POWER'S *20TH ANNIVERSARY* ISSUE JUST CAME!
NINTENDO POWER 20th Anniversary
WHAT? IT'S BEEN 20 YEARS *ALREADY?!*
WHOA, ALL THE OLD SYSTEMS ARE IN HERE!
HEY, DID I EVER TELL YOU THEY NAMED THE NES AFTER *ME?*
IT WAS ORIGINALLY CALLED THE NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM...TOP...ENTERTAINMENT... RADICAL...OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
THEY USED "ENTERTAINMENT" TWICE?
NINTENDO POWER
Y'KNOW, IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS, WE COULDN'T USE THE INTERNET TO SOLVE EVERYTHING. WE ONLY HAD OUR *BRAINS* AND *LIGHTNING-FAST REFLEXES!*
THEN WHAT WERE ALL YOUR OLD *STRATEGY GUIDES* FOR?
OH, THOSE ARE MY PRIDE AND JOY--EVERY NINTENDO POWER PLAYER'S GUIDE EVER MADE!
I ALSO HOLD THE RECORD FOR MOST CALLS TO THE NINTENDO GAME COUNSELOR *HOTLINE.*
A *HOTLINE?*
WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT NEEDING A BUNCH OF *SUPERGEEKS* TO TELL YOU HOW TO BEAT A GAME?
HEY, WATCH THE NAME CALLING!
THAT'S HOW I MET YOUR *MOTHER.*

WRITER: CHRIS SLATE, ARTIST: RYAN KINNAIRD ©2008 NINTENDO


WHOA, LOOK AT THESE OLD GAMES....I CAN'T IMAGINE EVER PLAYING WITHOUT MOTION CONTROL.
HEY, THE NES INVENTED MOTION CONTROL! BEHOLD, THE POWER GLOVE!
THAT LOOKS PRETTY DORKY, DAD.
OH YEAH? SAY THAT AGAIN AFTER YOU'VE SEEN THIS BABY IN ACTION IN THE GREATEST MOVIE OF ALL TIME--THE WIZARD!
POWER GLOVE
NINTENDO POWER
100 MINUTES AND COUNTLESS PRODUCT PLACEMENTS LATER...
I STILL GET GOOSEBUMPS WHEN THEY PLAY SUPER MARIO BROS. 3 AT THE END. THAT REMINDS ME, I'VE GOT THE SUPER MARIO BROS. MOVIE AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE, TOO!
UM, HEY! WHAT'S THAT OVER THERE?!
WHAT, THE VIRTUAL BOY? YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS. IT'S WHAT YOU USE TO PLAY THOSE COPIES OF NESTER'S FUNKY BOWLING THAT I GIVE YOU EVERY CHRISTMAS.
UM, YEAH, OF COURSE.
STAY ON SANTA'S "NICE" LIST AND THERE'S PLENTY MORE WHERE THOSE CAME FROM!
HEY, ARE WE GONNA PLAY SOME KART, OR WHAT?
OH, RIGHT! LET'S SEE IF YOU CAN BEAT ME WITHOUT USING A LAME POW BLOCK THIS TIME!
YOU DO KNOW HOW TO DODGE THOSE, RIGHT?
WHEN THE BLOCK SHRINKS TO ITS SMALLEST SIZE, JUST SHAKE THE WHEEL LIKE YOU'RE DOING A TRICK. YOU'LL LOSE ITEMS, BUT WON'T SLOW DOWN.
Wii
UH.....WHAT?
JUST MAKING SURE YOU AREN'T WEARING A BOW TIE.
MY SON, THE GAME GENIUS! IT MUST RUN IN THE FAMILY.
LET'S RACE!
YOU'RE ON, DAD.
NINTENDO POWER
20th Anniversary

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LCOME CHALL

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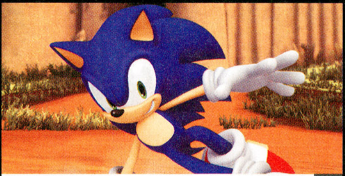

SONIC UNLEASHED 66

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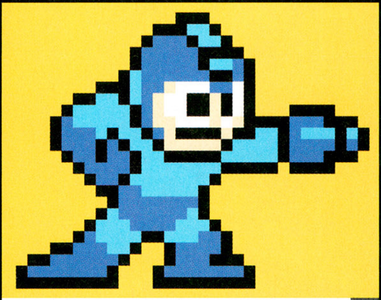

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DS = NINTENDO DS
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWare

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One Chocobo.
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Chocobo's ability: Flame Lance!!!
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Moogle 20

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Pulse

20 Years of Playing with Power

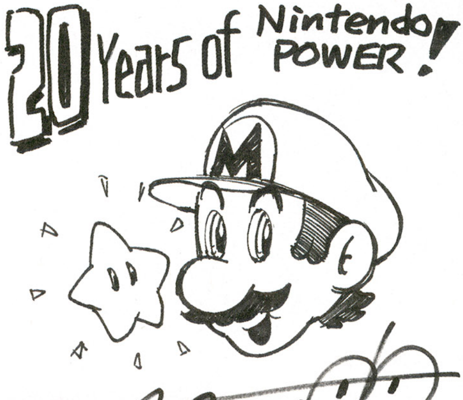
I'll never forget how blown away I was by the first issue of Nintendo Power. In a time before the Internet, and before there were other game mags, NP exploded onto the scene as a treasure trove of gaming info. NP brought the world of Nintendo to our doorsteps and connected fans from coast to coast.

While a lot has changed over the past two decades, I'm proud to say that Nintendo Power still thrives, informing fans and bringing them together as it always has. Living up to our magazine's storied legacy is a huge responsibility for me and the rest of the NP team, and it's a lot of hard work, but we know we're the luckiest gamers on the planet.

As both NP's current editor In chief and a lifelong reader of the magazine, I have to give a big thanks to the many amazing people who put their hearts into Nintendo Power over its many years. And to Nintendo for starting the magazine and giving us countless fond memories of so many incredible games. And last but not least, a very special thanks to you, the readers, who have kept NP going. Let's plan another big celebration in 20 more years!

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

CONGRATULATIONS


20 Years of Nintendo POWER!

Miyamoto

SHIGERU MIYAMOTO, SENIOR MANAGING DIRECTOR & GENERAL MANAGER, EAD, NINTENDO CO., LTD.

[LETTERS]

Welcome to a very special installment of Pulse letters! Back in Vol. 228 I asked all of you to share the stories of your first Nintendo experiences, and in keeping with our 20th-anniversary theme, we're sharing some of your responses. Thanks a ton to the hundreds of you who wrote in!

IT STARTED WITH A SNAP

For me, it all started with the N64. My first game was Pokémon Snap, followed by Pokémon Stadium, F-Zero X, Super Mario 64, and Mario Tennis. Sadly, I could never get Ocarina of Time, Mario Kart 64, or Star Fox 64 back then, but now I have all three of those titles on the Virtual Console, and I couldn't be happier. I want to give a shout-out to whoever thought of the Virtual Console. Thanks, guys, for helping me remember my roots.

BASEBALL NUMBER IS 64

FAMILY TRADITION

It was a tradition in my family that when we turned seven, we would receive a Game Boy. When my older brother got his Game Boy Color first, I stared at it in wonder. Something in my head just clicked at that moment. Every day after, I would sneak up on my brother to watch him play Super Mario Land or Pokémon Red (he hated when I did that). I got my own Game Boy two years later, along with Pokémon Blue. When I played The Legend of Zelda: Oracle of Ages, I practically fainted in pure awe, and knew that I had to play the other Zelda games. Now I own every Zelda title in one form or another. I love Nintendo so much, I dream in pixels.

ULTIMATEZELDAFAN

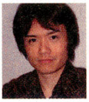
SILVER LINING

My first taste of Nintendo gaming was, believe it or not, in the hospital! I was five years old and pretty sick when, one day, a nurse wheeled in a TV with a Nintendo 64 connected and Super Mario 64

ON 20 YEARS OF NINTENDO POWER!

Nintendo Power magazine made its debut 20 years ago, between the introductions of Mario, Zelda, Kirby, Pokémon and other franchises, and thanks to Nintendo fans, they have flourished in many incarnations. I think it is also thanks to your support and appreciation that we were able to create a series like Smash Bros., which features a variety of characters from different Nintendo games. We are committed to always challenging ourselves in order to provide our fans with fresh surprises in meaningful ways while still maintaining our traditions... so please stay tuned for the next new experiences coming from Nintendo. **SATORU IWATA, PRESIDENT, NINTENDO CO., LTD.**

Congratulations on 20 years! Mega Man already celebrated his 20th anniversary, so that makes him a year older. But lasting 20 years is no easy task, and Mega Man and Nintendo Power have lasted so long thanks to the support of all the gamers out there. I'm really happy about that. I hope that both Mega Man and Nintendo Power get to celebrate their 30th or even 40th anniversaries! **KEIJI INAFUNE, PRODUCER, R & D STRATEGY COMMITTEE, CAPCOM**



Congratulations on the 20th anniversary! Excellent! I believe that great video games and Nintendo Power together can make history. Thank you for supporting our industry, and I look forward to collaborating more in the future. **MASAHIRO SAKURAI, PRESIDENT, SORA LTD.**

Congratulations on your 20th birthday!!! The Castlevania series also continues on after 20 years, thanks to people like Nintendo Power's readers. Hopefully, with this support we can continue the series for another 20 years. I hope I'm still involved when this happens. **KOJI IGARASHI, CASTLEVANIA SERIES PRODUCER, KONAMI**

Around the world, there are millions of video game players who can't imagine not having instant online access to all the video game information they want. They've never known a time when games were invisible in newspapers...and on TV.

In its own way, Nintendo Power is as innovative as almost anything Nintendo has ever devised. Because not only did it deliver a dependable package of information to avid Nintendo fans, but it introduced ways of talking about video games that have been copied by hundreds of news outlets ever since. Nintendo Power subscribers became the first "community" of video game lovers.

So, best wishes from Nintendo to all those at Nintendo Power who have not only done their jobs well, but who've helped put an entire entertainment industry on the map. **REGGIE FILS-AIME, PRESIDENT AND COO, NINTENDO OF AMERICA**

in the cartridge slot. I was hooked within a minute of playing. I got an N64 for Christmas that year and the rest is history.
LOUIS B.

FROM ONE GOOMBA

My dad and uncle would always play Super Mario Bros. 3, and I wanted to play really bad but kept losing because I was only three at the time. One day my dad really tried to help me and I squashed my first Goomba—I was hooked on Nintendo forever. My dad and I still bring out my Super NES to play Mario games and U.N. Squadron.
(NO NAME GIVEN)

HERE-A WE GO!

I started gaming with the N64 and a little game called Super Mario 64. My brother, dad, and I started playing by simply running around in Peach's castle, and as we began to explore the game's many worlds, it exploded into a full-blown, energy-drink-fueled obsession. As a gamer, I'm ashamed to say that I am not old enough to be a part of the generation that experienced firsthand the golden era of gaming, although I suppose that Mario's first outing in 3-D-rendered graphics isn't so bad of an introduction.
TANIS H.

TRY AND TRY AGAIN

It all started when I was five years old, when my dad bought a Nintendo 64 and the original Super Smash Bros. I grabbed the controller and picked the dude in green (who ended up being Link and started my Zelda obsession) to fight my dad, who chose Donkey Kong. I lost the first hundred times, but my skills got better until I finally beat him! After that I began an epic quest to conquer every Zelda game ever made, whether it was in Japanese, made for the original Nintendo console, or even made by...Philips.
NASOKAKEWE

I was born in 1991, which is also Yoshi's "birth" year—that right there tells me that I was born with the video game gene. Somewhere between two to four years of age I became fascinated with games. I watched my mom play Bubble Bobble and I fell in love with it. I later became a huge Mario fan; Super Mario World is the first game I completed. At about nine I found this gem of a game called Super Mario RPG. I played it to the last world before my data was erased, and I was so distraught that I didn't pick up the game again until last year, when I finally beat it. It's now my favorite game. I've been playing Nintendo games since I was old enough to hold a controller, and I'll be playing them until I'm too old to see the TV.

CODY S.

TRADING UP

You asked how I first got into Nintendo gaming? By force! When I was in second grade, I came home from school one day to find my dad handing over decent-sized cardboard boxes to a stranger. I grabbed a snack and asked dad who it was. "Oh, he just bought our Atari and all our accessories and games." One-and-a-half temper tantrums later, I was asked to come downstairs to see the new Nintendo Entertainment System my parents had bought as a replacement. After a few hours with Super Mario Bros. and Castlevania, the loss of Space Invaders, Chopper Command, and a blister-inducing joystick wasn't as devastating as I'd thought. Now I'm a proud owner of every Nintendo system to hit store shelves since (and I even got to replace that Atari 20 years later).

JORDAN M. DAVIS

WOW, I'M REALLY GOOD!

I got hooked on video games when I was just two years old. Back then I loved playing Super Mario All-Stars on our Super NES...or so I thought. It turns out that when I thought I was playing, I was actually just holding a disconnected controller as one of my older brothers played through levels.

BOBBY S.

FIRST LOVE

I was introduced to Nintendo at a very young age through the Game Boy and The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening (both of which belonged to my older brother). I'd do everything I could to borrow them from him, and even just take them when he said no.

Those days spent with my face glued to the wonderfully pixelated green-and-black screen were the best of my life. Time spent gathering rupees, slaying baddies, and crawling the dungeons in search of the Siren's Musical Instruments was time well spent. I can remember the utter frustration I felt when I didn't know what to do next. I would work so hard thinking about my problem that I'd start to dream about it and eventually come up with the solution. Good times....

I fell so in love with that game that I was devastated when the battery in the cartridge finally died. I'm not at all ashamed to admit that I cried about it.

Many years later, I stumbled across the Game Boy Color's DX version of the game in a local game store. I was apprehensive at first, not wanting to have my heart so brutally broken again when the battery in this one would eventually die, but I bought it anyway and the memories were overwhelming. My eyes remembered every screen and my hands remembered every step. It was pure magic—no, better than that; it was childhood revisited. And when I beat the game again, the coo of the Wind Fish was the sweetest sound in the world.

Link's Awakening was my very first love. It opened the doors of gaming to me, not to mention to the rest of the Zelda titles. It has been, and always will be, my all-time favorite game. Sure, it has outdated graphics and tinkly music, but it holds the key to my very soul, and no other game has affected me the same way since.

AMY B.

Chris Slate here, again. Wow, what an amazing walk down memory lane! As someone who grew up with the NES, it was fun to read the stories of people who started playing during other chapters of Nintendo history. My own story is pretty common, but no less magical for me: I had asked for an NES for Christmas so that I could play Kung Fu, but ended up shoving it aside for Super Mario Bros. Once you're hooked, you're hooked.

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Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

You don't need to send us links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

There's no need to ask about the status of upcoming games; we'll always pass along any updates as soon as we get them.

NINTENDO POWER

BIRTHDAY BOYS & GIRLS

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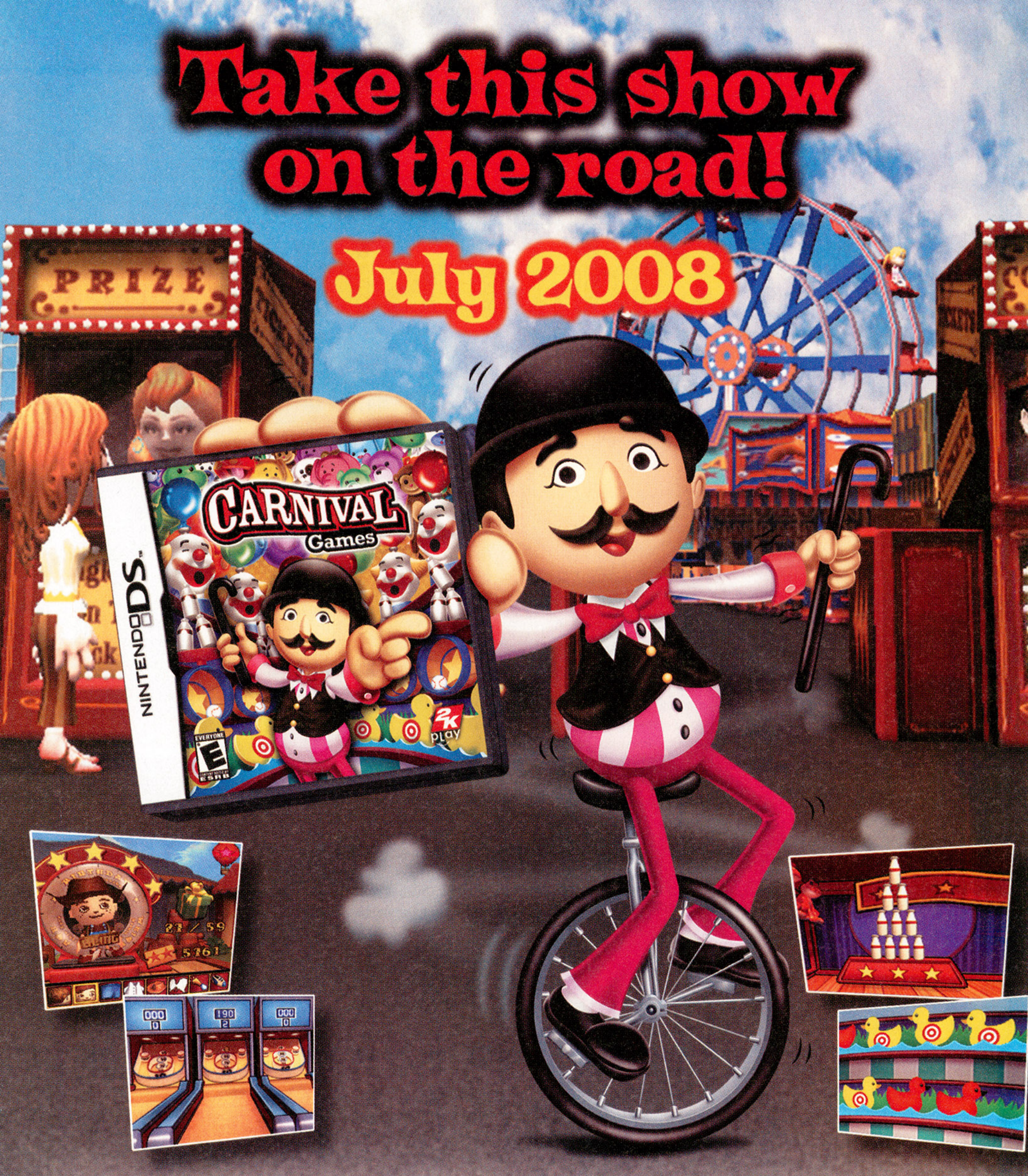
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BIONIC CLAN

MAGICAL MUSICAL

MEET YOUR MAKER

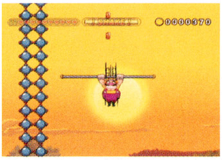
Christmas in July

With four high-profile games set for release in the span of 15 days, Nintendo of Japan's new lineup has Wii and DS owners relishing the muggiest month of summer.

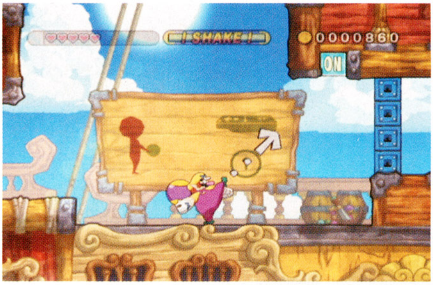
After spending the early months of 2008 training Japanese Nintendo fans in everything from common sense to calligraphy to crossbow usage, Nintendo of Japan is kicking back with a summer slate that's chockablock with straight-up *games*.

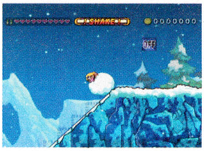
The fun begins with the July 24th release of **Wario Land Shake** for Wii. In the first home-console Wario Land, players will hold the Wii remote sideways and use the Control Pad and 1 and 2 Buttons to control Wario's basic actions, while shaking and tilting the Wii remote to trigger a variety of context-sensitive actions. When the word *SHAKE!* lights up at the top of the screen like a giant applause sign, a jiggle of the Wii remote can dish out a shockwave-generating butt-stomp, perform gymnastic leaps on parallel bars, or throttle coins and items out of stunned foes. More-refined tilting actions let you aim projectiles or steer vehicles like mine carts, rockets, and submarines. Wario Land Shake features 20 stages of colorful 2-D environments reminiscent of Super Mario World, and richly animated cartoon-style characters.

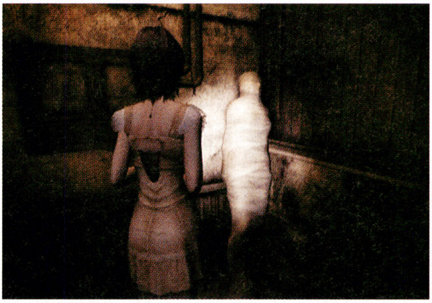
The very next week will see the release of the Wii-exclusive **Fatal Frame: The Mask of the Lunar Eclipse**. The Fatal Frame franchise is widely regarded as the most terrifying series in gaming,



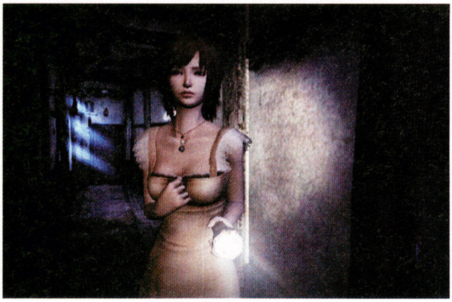
WARIO LAND SHAKE

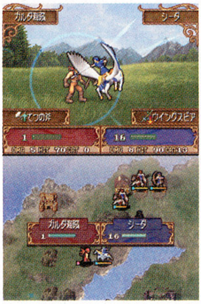




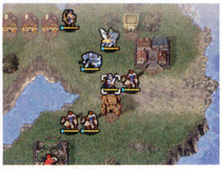


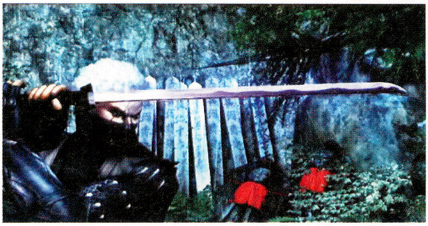
FATAL FRAME: THE MASK OF THE LUNAR ECLIPSE





FIRE EMBLEM: DRAGONS OF DARKNESS AND THE BLADE OF LIGHT





featuring unlikely heroes exploring haunted houses with only a camera for protection. This is the first time Fatal Frame has come to a Nintendo platform, and with its exceptionally detailed character models and crap-yourself ghost effects, it looks better than ever on Wii. The star of this installment is Ruka Minazuki, one of five girls kidnapped by an unknown perpetrator in their youth. Now, long after their rescue, two of the girls have died under mysterious circumstances, and Ruka is returning to the remote and—I'm going out on a limb here—possibly haunted island where the girls had been held. Summer is the season for ghost stories in Japan, and it sounds like the tripartite team of Nintendo, Tecmo, and Grasshopper Manufacture have a doozy on their hands.

Fatal Frame players can heal their shattered nerves with a bout of **Rhythm Tengoku Gold** on the Nintendo DS, which also ships on July 31st. The original Rhythm Tengoku came out so late in the Game Boy Advance's life that it never had a chance at a US localization, but it was a surprise hit that ultimately sold more than 300,000 copies in Japan. Born from the minds of the WarioWare team, Rhythm Tengoku rapidly switched from one button-tapping minigame to another within the same song, with the same beats representing cats bouncing on a trampoline one second and exploding fireworks the next. The concept in Rhythm Tengoku Gold is the same, except players now hold the Nintendo DS like a book and tap to the rhythm with the stylus.

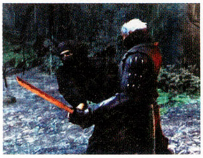
That should keep DS owners busy while they wait a week for the release of **Fire Emblem: Dragons of Darkness and the Blade of Light**, a DS remake of the very first Fire Emblem game. If you've ever wondered who Marth was in Super Smash Bros., this game will answer your question—that is, if we're lucky enough to see it on our shores (no North American announcement has been made). In this DS release, the field map fills the lower screen while the battle animations play out above, and players will be able to skirmish against friends online using Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection.

With these releases coming hot on the heels of several major third-party titles, including Square Enix's Dragon Quest V and Nameless Game (a DS horror title), our Japanese brethren are in for one hell of a summer vacation. None of these games had been announced for North America at press time, but stay tuned.

THIRD-PARTIES DELIVER NINJAS AND WHALEBACK AGRICULTURE TO Wii

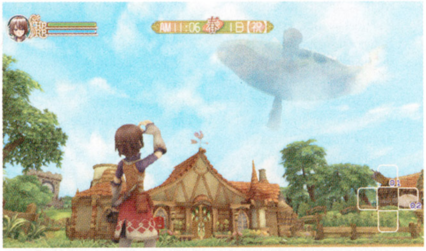
Fatal Frame isn't the only PlayStation/Xbox series defecting to Wii this year. In a conference held on June 6th, From Software and their North American partner Ubisoft announced the release of a new trilogy of Tenchu games, to be kicked off with **Tenchu 4** exclusively on Wii. (No details or platforms have been announced for the two games to follow.)

TENCHU 4

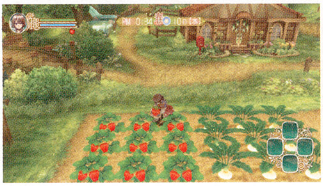


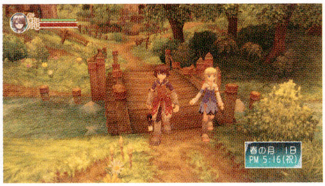
Tenchu 4 reunites From Software with Acquire, the developer of the series' first two (and arguably best) installments, who are using Wii's capabilities to take the series in a new direction that includes both photorealistic character models and motion-sensitive controls. While basic movement is handled with the nunchuk, a sideways flick of the Wii remote will send your ninja sliding for cover, and other motions can be used to dish out special attacks in combat. Tenchu 4 also features a new focus on lighting, allowing players to hide in darkness and even create it by dousing torches and other light sources. Tenchu is slated for an October 23rd release in Japan, and we're expecting it to hit North American shores not long after.

Rune Factory Frontiers is another promising third-party Wii exclusive, although it differs from Tenchu 4 in every other possible way. The Rune Factory series brought a fantasy-RPG twist to the Harvest Moon franchise, and Rune Factory Frontiers brings the series' strangely addictive mix of agriculture, dungeon-crawling, and wife-courting to a new fantasy world set on the islandlike backs of giant flying whales. No US release has been set, but Japanese gamers will be able to live out their cetacean farming fantasies by year's end. —CASEY L.



RUNE FACTORY FRONTIERS





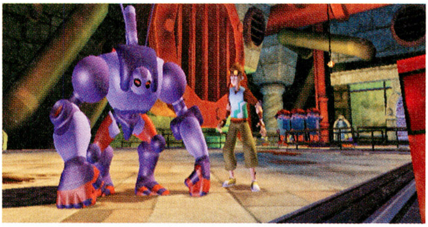
More than Meets the Spy

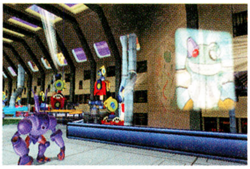
A new band of superheroes infiltrates Wii in Capcom's cartoon-inspired **Spyborgs**.

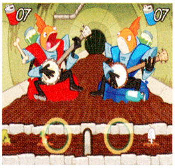
Capcom has joined forces with upstart developer Bionic Games for Spyborgs, an all-new action-adventure headed exclusively to Wii in 2009. Presented as a Saturday-morning cartoon, the game follows the titular team of five bionic superspies through an entire "season," with each level representing an individual episode. There's even the occasional interactive commercial break, such as an ad that has you strumming the Wii remote like a banjo as two sewer-dwelling fish put their poo lamentations into song. Making you laugh is one of the development team's primary objectives, and they seem to be aiming for an off-the-wall brand of humor reminiscent of Cartoon Network's Adult Swim.

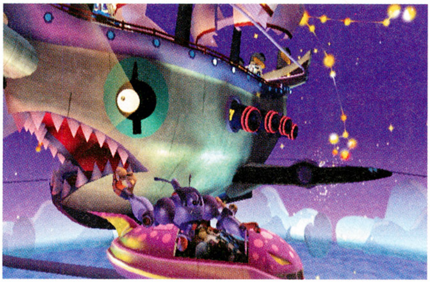
Another key component of the game is teamwork—Spyborgs always work in pairs, and you can play alongside either a human friend or an AI-controlled partner, using your heroes' unique abilities in tandem to overcome certain challenges. You'll spend most of your time traversing on foot and battling enemies up close, but the developers promise frequent changes of pace, including a scene in which one player drives a monster truck while the other mans the minigun in the back.

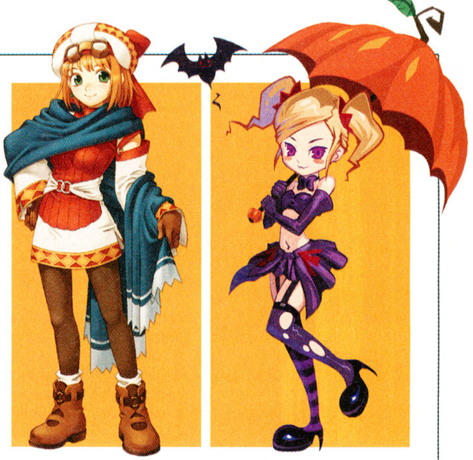
Spyborgs is still extremely early in development, but given that many of its creators previously worked on the Ratchet & Clank series, we'll be keeping a close eye on the game's progress in the months to come. —STEVE T.











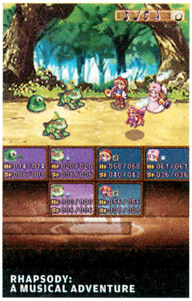
Two of a Kind

NIS America has two portable RPGs on the way—**Rhapsody: A Musical Adventure** and **A Witch's Tale**.

Originally a PlayStation-only publisher, NIS America has recently started making games for Nintendo's dual-screened handheld. The first two titles on the radar were puzzle game Puchi Puchi Virus and strategy-RPG Disgaea DS. However, the company that's famous for its quirky RPGs announced that it will have two more DS offerings this year—Rhapsody: A Musical Adventure in September and A Witch's Tale in October.

A port of 2000's PlayStation game of the same name, the NIS-developed Rhapsody: A Musical Adventure is, as the title suggests, a music-focused RPG. Main character and frequent singer Cornet, equipped with a wish-granting magical horn, is on a quest with her puppet friend (Cornet can talk to puppets, you see—we told you NIS made quirky RPGs) to save Prince Ferdinand, who's been turned to stone by an evil witch. The gameplay has been simplified for this DS port, with stylus-controlled movement (you can also use the Control Pad if you want), 2-D battles instead of the original's strategy-RPG-style 3-D ones, and easier-to-navigate, touch-screen-centric battle commands.

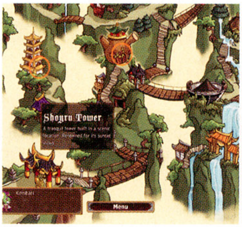
A Witch's Tale, on the other hand, is a completely new game developed by Hit Maker (who made Blade Dancer: Lineage of Light and Dragoneer's Aria for PSP). The basic story is about a legend that says the surface world was invaded by a group of evil witches who were defeated by a girl named Alice. A thousand years later, it looks like the Witch Queen is plotting a comeback. This action-RPG with a *The Nightmare Before Christmas*-esque art style is played primarily via the touch screen: use your stylus to run and attack or to draw runes and cast spells. We haven't seen the game in action yet, but we'll have more information on this promising title soon. —JUSTIN C.

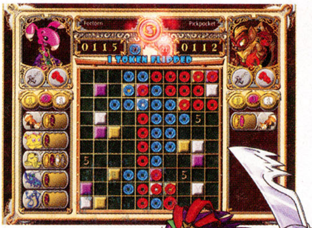


RHAPSODY: A MUSICAL ADVENTURE

Critter Quest

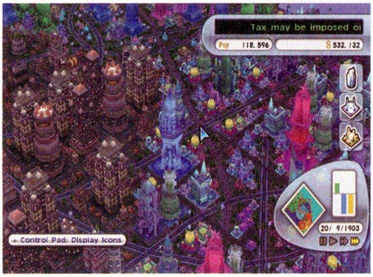
Capcom and the makers of Puzzle Quest offer a cerebral twist on the world of Neopets with **Neopets Puzzle Adventure** for Wii and DS.





As Internet phenomena go, Neopets.com is the equivalent of an 800-pound gorilla—the virtual pet community enjoys more than 11 million unique visitors per month. Until now, that success hasn't translated to quality video games, but Capcom hopes to change all that by teaming with Infinite Interactive, the folks who brought us the surprise hit Puzzle Quest. Taking an approach similar to that title's, Neopets Puzzle Adventure lets players create their own hero (in this case a Neopet), embark on a series of adventures, and challenge foes via addictive puzzle battles. The core mechanics are based on the classic board game Reversi (also called Othello), but you can shake things up by using a wide variety of items, as well as the special abilities of more than 100 collectible Petpets. The DS version boasts Wi-Fi play, and both games will reward you with codes that you can redeem for exclusive virtual goodies at Neopets.com. —STEVE T.

Pickpocket
Fortern
Start Battle
More Options



If You Build It...

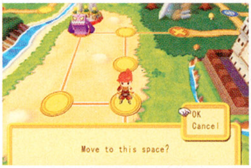
Create (and destroy) the city of your dreams in EA's **SimCity Creator** for Wii and DS.

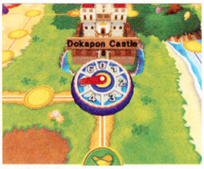
Still going strong after nearly 20 years, the beloved SimCity series will let players test their urban-planning skills in all-new ways when Electronic Arts releases SimCity Creator on Wii and DS this September. The main feature that sets the Wii version apart from previous titles is the use of the Wii remote—all you need to do is point and click to create organic, natural-looking cities, complete with roadways, skyscrapers, factories, and homes. More than 30 "hero" buildings will help shape the city in unique ways (via dessert-themed architecture, for instance), and if you don't want to deal with the minutiae, you can hire characters from the MySims titles to assist you. If you want, you can even unleash disasters upon your city—earthquakes, tornados, meteors, UFOs, giant robots, and more—using motion-based controls. The DS version of SimCity Creator offers entirely different challenges, as you guide your city from ancient times (when there's no electricity and no factories to worry about) to the present day. —CHRIS H.

Cash is King

Money makes the world go 'round in Atlus's Wii RPG-board game hybrid **Dokapon Kingdom**, a four-player battle for riches and a maiden's hand.

Run down by monsters, Dokapon Kingdom has ceased to generate revenue for its greedy king. To remedy the situation, the monarch has put out a call for heroes. The knight who scores the most victories will ride the royal gravy train and wed the king's daughter, Princess Penny. The quest takes participants through several themed boards, where they face off against each other in minigames (such as Rock, Paper, Scissors) and slay monsters. A little bit of luck, a touch of magic, and a lot of cutthroat strategy go a long way toward putting you on top of the hero heap. Locations include an African village, a volcano interior, and a Nottingham-inspired forest. The game's RPG pedigree accounts for more interactions with inhabitants than you would expect in an average party game, along with hidden treasures and all-out battles. Expect swords to cross in the fall. —GEORGE S.





Krissy
Refresh

The Revolution Continues

Konami grooves on with two new music games: **DDR Hottest Party 2** for Wii and **Rock Revolution** for Wii and DS.

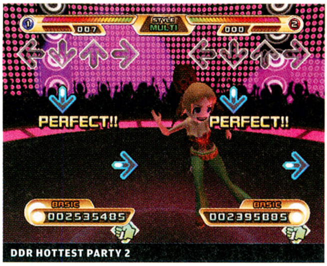
Before there was Guitar Hero or Rock Band, Konami was the undisputed champion of music video games. Now, as Dance Dance Revolution celebrates its 10th anniversary, the publisher is looking to reclaim that title with the help of two new rhythmic releases: Dance Dance Revolution Hottest Party 2 for Wii and Rock Revolution for Wii and DS.

Expanding upon the success of the original Hottest Party (released last year), DDR Hottest Party 2 uses the same combination of dance mat-, remote-, and nunchuk-based dance steps, only now with more content. The improvements include a new graphics engine (which boasts more-dynamic backgrounds), Mii support, a new dance motion (shaking the remote to fend off opponents' attacks in versus mode), and an all-new track list that offers songs such as Rihanna's "Umbrella" and Michael Jackson's "Black or White."

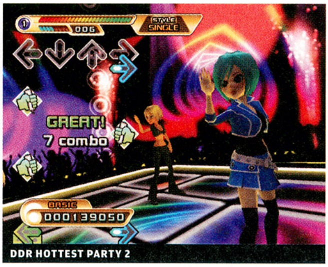
While DDR Hottest Party 2 is a refinement of a classic series, Rock Revolution is an all-new entry in Konami's music stable. Unlike other band-oriented music games, the Wii version of Rock Revolution doesn't require expensive peripherals; instead, you play air drum, air bass, and air guitar using the remote and nunchuk. More than 40 songs will be on the play list, which you'll get to enjoy in several modes, such as Quick Play, Career (which supports co-op play), Battle (for up to four players), and Free Play. You'll even be able to customize and power up your onscreen rock stars with new gear, including new picks, sticks, and amps.

The DS version of Rock Revolution is packed with features as well. Not surprisingly, you play your instruments via the touch screen; in the guitar mode, for example, you strum up or down to the music as arrows flow into the target zone. The DS version includes more than 20 hit songs, along with many of the features of its Wii cousin, such as Quick Play, Career mode, and four-player co-op and versus modes.

Both versions of Rock Revolution, as well as DDR Hottest Party 2, will be available this fall.
—CHRIS H.



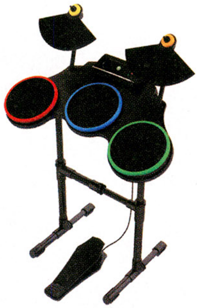
DDR HOTTEST PARTY 2



DDR HOTTEST PARTY 2

Making the Band

It may have the Guitar Hero name, but **Guitar Hero World Tour** on Wii is about much more than simply shredding.



Drum set shown is from the Xbox 360 version.

With the release of Rock Band, things were looking a little grim for Guitar Hero—after all, who wants to just play the guitar when you can strum, drum, and sing, all at the same time? Enter Guitar Hero World Tour, a game that lets you do all the things Rock Band does and more. For starters, the drums are more akin to a real drum kit, with three drum pads, two cymbals, and a foot pedal. In addition to customizable characters, a track list composed entirely of the original artists' recordings (i.e., no soundalikes), and an eight-player Battle of the Bands mode, the game will feature a Music Studio mode, which allows you to create your own music. No Wii-specific details have been announced yet, but publisher Activision and developer Vicarious Visions will reveal more in the coming months. Guitar Hero World Tour is slated to hit store shelves in October.
—JUSTIN C.

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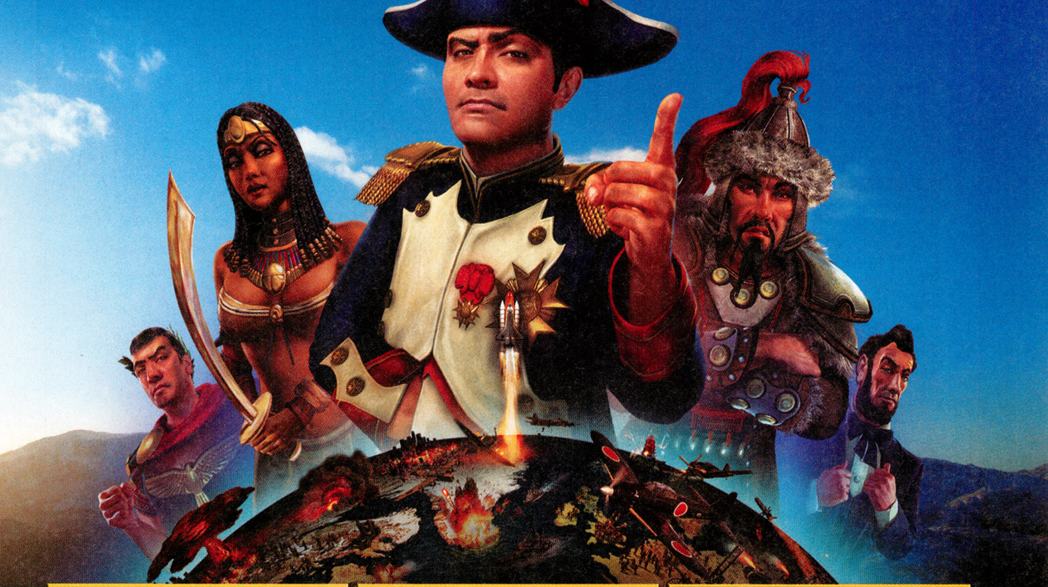

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GAME WATCH FORECAST

While it may seem like a long wait for a lot of the games on this list, many of them will be worth the wait. (Probably.) Remember: Patience is a virtue.

Wii		
Active Life: Outdoor Challenge	Namco Bandai	7/08
Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	Ubisoft	TBA
Castlevania Judgment	Konami	FALL 08
Catch of the Day	Electronic Arts	TBA
Cooking Mama 2: Cooking with Friends	Majesco	10/08
Crash: Mind over Mutant	Sierra	10/08
Dance Dance Revolution Hottest Party 2	Konami	FALL 08
de Blob	THQ	9/08
The Destiny of Zorro	Pronto Games	TBA
Disaster: Day of Crisis	Nintendo	TBA
Dokapon Kingdom	Atlus	FALL 08
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	9/08
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
FaceBreaker	Electronic Arts	11/08
FIFA 09 All-Play	Electronic Arts	2008
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	TBA
Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo's Dungeon	Square Enix	7/08
Ford Racing Off Road	Empire Interactive	7/08
Ghostbusters	Sierra	10/08
Gravity	Deep Silver	9/08
Guitar Hero World Tour	Activision	10/08
Harvest Moon: Tree of Tranquility	Natsume	7/08
Indoor Sports	Konami	TBA
The King of Fighters Collection: The Orochi Saga	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	Sierra	10/08
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	Warner Bros. Interactive	FALL 08
Line Rider 2: Unbound	InXile	SUM 08
Little King's Story	XSEED Games	WIN 08
Little League World Series Baseball 2008	Activision	8/08
Littlest Pet Shop	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Lost in Blue: Shipwrecked	Konami	9/08
Madden 09 All-Play	Electronic Arts	8/08
MadWorld	Sega	2009
Major Minor's Majestic March	Majesco	2009
Mario Super Sluggers	Nintendo	TBA
MLB Power Pros 2008	2K Sports	FALL 08
Monster Lab	Eidos	9/08
Mushroom Men	Gamecock Media Group	10/08
MySims Kingdom	Electronic Arts	2008
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution 2	Tomy	FALL 08
NBA Live 09 All-Play	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
NCAA Football 09 All-Play	EA Sports	7/08
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	Capcom	WIN 08
NERF N-Strike	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Order Up!	Zoo	7/08
Pitfall: The Big Adventure	Activision	FALL 08
Rock Band Track Pack Volume 1	MTV Games	7/08
Rock Revolution	Konami	FALL 08
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	Tecmo	8/08
Sam & Max Season One	The Adventure Company	FALL 08
Samba de Amigo	Sega	8/08
Samurai Shodown Anthology	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
Secret Files: Tenguska	Deep Silver	FALL 08
Shaun White Snowboarding	Ubisoft	2008
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	9/08
SimCity Creator	Electronic Arts	9/08
Skate It	Electronic Arts	12/08
SNK Arcade Classics Vol. 1	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
Sonic Unleashed	Sega	Q4 08
Space Chimps	Brash	SUM 08
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	Activision	FALL 08
Spyborgs	Capcom	2009
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Lightsaber Duels	LucasArts	FALL 08
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	9/08
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09 All-Play	Electronic Arts	8/08
TNA iMPACT!	Midway	9/08
Tomb Raider: Underworld	Eidos	11/08
Ultimate Band	Disney Interactive	9/08
We Cheer	Namco Bandai	FALL 08
We Love Golf!	Capcom	7/08
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Wonderworld Amusement Park	Majesco	7/08
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	THQ	FALL 08
NINTENDO DS		
Bangai-O Spirits	D3 Publisher	8/08
Big Bang Mini	SouthPeak	FALL 08
Bleach: Dark Souls	Sega	8/08
Blood Bowl	Focus Home Interactive	2008
Brave	SouthPeak Interactive	Q3 08
Broken Sword	Ubisoft	9/08
Carnival Games	2K Play	7/08
Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia	Konami	FALL 08
Catch of the Day	Electronic Arts	TBA
Commando: Steel Disaster	XS Games	8/08
Construction Combat: Lock's Quest	THQ	FALL 08
Crash: Mind over Mutant	Sierra	10/08
de Blob	THQ	9/08
Digimon World Championship	Namco Bandai	8/08
Dinosaur King	Sega	8/08
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Disgaea DS	NIS America	9/08
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	9/08
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Quest IV	Square Enix	9/08
Dragon Quest V	Square Enix	TBA
Dragon Quest VI	Square Enix	TBA
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Drawn to Life: SpongeBob SquarePants Edition	THQ	FALL 08
Final Fantasy IV	Square Enix	7/08
From the Abyss	Aksys	2008
Gauntlet	Eidos	9/08
Ghostbusters	Sierra	10/08
Gravity	Deep Silver	9/08
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness	Natsume	7/08
The Humans	Deep Silver	9/08
Infinite Line	Sega	2009
Izuna 2: The Unemployed Ninja Returns	Atlus	7/08
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	Sierra	10/08
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	Warner Bros. Interactive	FALL 08
Line Rider 2: Unbound	InXile	SUM 08
Little League World Series Baseball 2008	Activision	8/08
Littlest Pet Shop	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Metal Slug 7	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
MLB Power Pros 2008	2K Sports	FALL 08
Moon	Mastiff	Q4 08
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi	Gamecock Media Group	10/08
MySims Kingdom	Electronic Arts	2008
Nancy Drew: The Mystery of the Clue Bender Society	Majesco	7/08
Naruto: Path of the Ninja 2	Tomy	9/08
National Geographic Panda	Namco Bandai	11/08
NERF N-Strike	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	Capcom	WIN 08
New International Track and Field	Konami	7/08
Ninjatown	SouthPeak Interactive	10/08
Pet Vet Down Under	Deep Silver	FALL 08
PipeMania	Empire Interactive	9/08
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Prey the Stars	Koei	TBA
Prince of Persia: The Fallen King	Ubisoft	FALL 08
Professor Branium	Destineer	Q3 08
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	D3PA	10/08
Red Bull BC One	Ignition	TBA
Rhapsody: A Musical Adventure	NIS America	9/08
Robocalypse	TBA	SPR 08
Rock Revolution	Konami	FALL 08
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Secret Files: Tenguska	Deep Silver	FALL 08
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	7/08
SimCity Creator	Electronic Arts	9/08
Skate It	Electronic Arts	12/08
Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood	Sega	FALL 08
Space Chimps	Brash	SUM 08
Spectrobes: Beyond the Portals	Disney Interactive	10/08
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	Activision	FALL 08
SpongeBob SquarePants: Drawn to Life	THQ	Q3 08
Spore Creatures	Electronic Arts	9/08
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Jedi Alliance	LucasArts	FALL 08
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	9/08
Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff	Tecmo	FALL 08
Tornado	Ignition	TBA
TrackMania DS	Focus Home Interactive	Q4 08
Trauma Center: Under the Knife 2	Atlus	SUM 08
Ultimate Band	Disney Interactive	9/08
Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise	THQ	FALL 08
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
A Witch's Tale	NIS America	10/08
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	THQ	FALL 08
Zubo	Electronic Arts	2008

RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH   *TENTATIVE TITLE   NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE

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Cash Plays

Forbes names former Nintendo chairman as Japan's richest man.

In a recent Forbes.com article listing Japan's 40 richest people, former Nintendo president and chairman Hiroshi Yamauchi was declared the country's wealthiest citizen with an estimated net worth of $7.8 billion. That's a lot of gold coins.

Keep on Rockin'

Rock Band on Wii gets more tracks.

While you can't go online and download any new songs for the Wii version of Rock Band, MTV Games has a solution: Rock Band Track Pack Volume 1. Featuring 20 songs, ranging from Grateful Dead's "Truckin'" to Paramore's "Crushcrushcrush," the Track Pack will hit in July.

Legend of an Unemployed Ninja

Team Ninja head leaves, sues Tecmo.

Tomonobu Itagaki, controversial head of Team Ninja and creator of hits such as Ninja Gaiden Dragon Sword, announced in early June that he will resign his position at Tecmo and is suing his former employer for 148 million yen. Itagaki is already planning his next action title for undisclosed platforms.

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NINTENDO DS™

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BANDAI NAMCO Games™

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Wii Channels

WiiWare just keeps getting more exciting. This month we've got the inside scoop on Capcom's retro-chic Mega Man 9, plus reviews of all the recent WiiWare releases.

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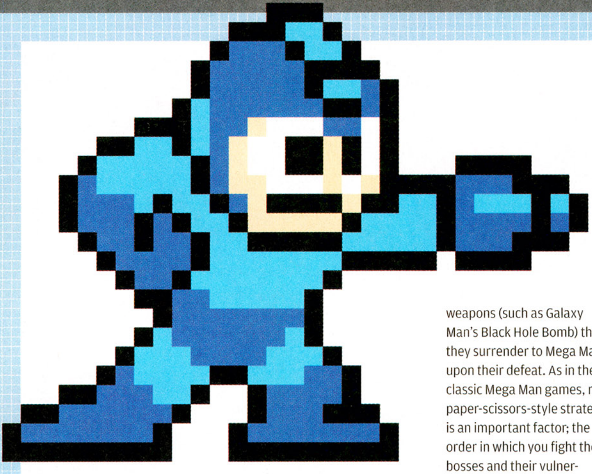
POP
PROTÖTHEA
STAR SOLDIER R
TOKI TORI
TV SHOW KING
V.I.P. CASINO: BLACKJACK

4 VIRTUAL CONSOLE GAMES

CITY CONNECTION
METAL SLUG
NINJA COMBAT
SKYKID

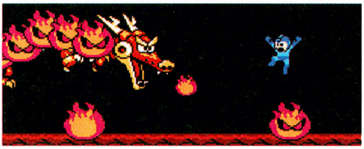


True Blue

The Blue Bomber is back—and WiiWare's got him—in **Mega Man 9**.

Mega Man is back. We don't mean Zero, or some Net Navi, or some dude with a Biometal—we mean the original Mega Man that started it all. One look at these screenshots tells you almost everything you need to know: Mega Man is back, and he'll be kickin' it old-school on WiiWare this fall in the appropriately titled Mega Man 9.

Set after the events of Mega Man 8 and based on the visuals and gameplay of the NES Mega Man games, Mega Man 9 returns straight to the Blue Bomber's roots. That means hardcore 2-D side-scrolling run-and-shoot action against eight all-new Robot Masters: Magma Man, Galaxy Man, Jewel Man, Concrete Man, Hornet Man, Plug Man, Tornado Man, and Splash Woman (yes, Woman!). As always, each boss resides in his or her own trap-laden lair, complete with instant-death spikes, bottomless pits, disappearing platforms, and stage-specific hazards. In Magma Man's stage you'll face lava flows that will defeat Mega Man in one hit; in Tornado Man's stage you'll negotiate magnetic spinning platforms that let you defy gravity; in Plug Man's stage you'll have to deal with shadowy Mega Man clones that emerge when you walk past certain walls.



The bosses also have special weapons (such as Galaxy Man's Black Hole Bomb) that they surrender to Mega Man upon their defeat. As in the classic Mega Man games, rock-paper-scissors-style strategy is an important factor; the order in which you fight the bosses and their vulnerability to different weapons can make all the difference between victory and defeat. Of course, mad scientist Dr. Wily is back, too, but this time, he claims that the latest robot rampage isn't his doing—he says it's caused by Mega Man's creator (and father figure) Dr. Light. Naturally, it's up to Mega Man to prove Dr. Light's innocence.

We could go on about how Mega Man 9 features classically influenced game design and thumb-busting challenge, enhanced with features such as online leaderboards and downloadable content, but instead we'll go straight to the source: the game's producer (and Mega Man's creator) Keiji Inafune. —CHRIS H.

NINTENDO POWER Why did you decide that now is finally the right time to create a classic-style 2-D Mega Man game, and why has it taken so long?

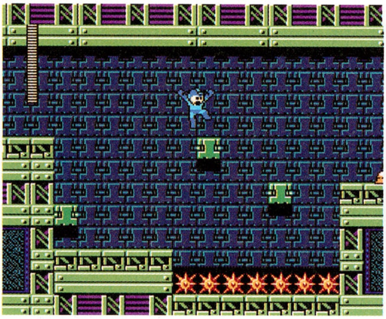
KEIJI INAFUNE I wouldn't mind making a sequel for any of the Mega Man series, not only the classic one. But because the original Mega Man series started around the same time I entered Capcom, my desire to make a sequel for that series is particularly strong.

Unfortunately, the simple fun of a classic Mega Man game doesn't fit into the grandiose and expansive world that the consumer gaming industry has become, and so you have to make games that match the current expectations. If you did push to have a game like [the classic Mega Man games] made, it would be criticized for things like being simplistic, outdated, or too expensive. I thought it would be too difficult to bring out another classic Mega Man in the current gaming climate.

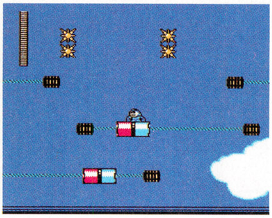
And then Nintendo came out with WiiWare for distributing downloadable content, and I felt I had an opportunity to finally realize the dreams I had been keeping on the back burner for so long.

I think WiiWare offers a great combination of simple games at a low price. And as fate would have it, the Virtual Console is causing people to reevaluate the classic games for the NES and such, and to see what made them good.

Our intent was to make a simple and enjoyable Mega Man sequel, so we said, "Let's make a new NES game!" and from there the ball got rolling.



If Mega Man looks a little different in the screenshot below, it's because he's rotating around the red-and-blue platform. Be sure not to fall into the abyss!



How does it feel, personally, to be able to return to the classic Mega Man formula?
I feel like saying, "Welcome back, Mega Man!" I feel like Mega Man is my father, because I learned so much about game-making from [those games]; but at the same time I also think of Mega Man as my own child. So when I say, "Welcome back," it's with the same feeling I would greet a family member with. I also would be happy if the fans felt that way too, so the "Welcome back" also carries my hopes [for the game] in it.

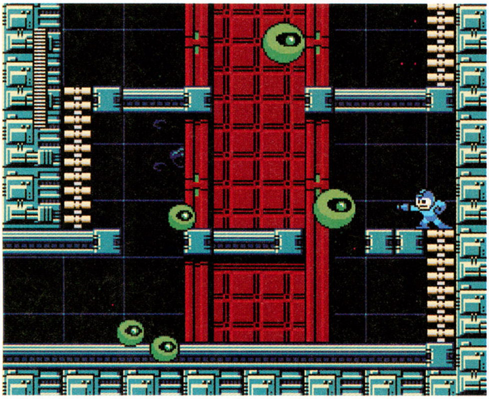
How did you approach this game differently from other games you've worked on recently?
I'm basically a producer, but this time I got to work really closely on the project. The game was made by the staff here at Capcom and the staff from Inti Creates, who worked on the Mega Man Zero series. I got to check all the content, and any problems I found, I fixed. Some examples of what I did are fixing a background that was different from the concept art and looking closely at the designs for the enemies in the game.

What do you think are the essential ingredients of Mega Man, and how are they being retained in this title?
Generally [the essential ingredients of Mega Man] are being able to choose any of the eight stages and then using the weapons from the defeated bosses to help you out in the rest of the game. Of course, that's also in this game, but we were really concerned with making it an enjoyable action game. One example would be the distribution of the Mets (small enemies in Mega Man) and how you have to time your jump and shoot so you don't take damage, or you can jump over them and then shoot them. It was important to us to put that kind of strategic decision-making into the game. The players encounter a situation, think what they want to do—sometimes in a split second—and that's how you get good action. Players have to combine their brains and playing techniques to be able to overcome a bunch of obstacles to clear the game. That sets it apart from other games in terms of the nervous anticipation and sense of satisfaction the player feels. Maintaining the proper mix of puzzlelike elements and shooting action are what make the game unique, and so that was upmost in our minds [when making the game].

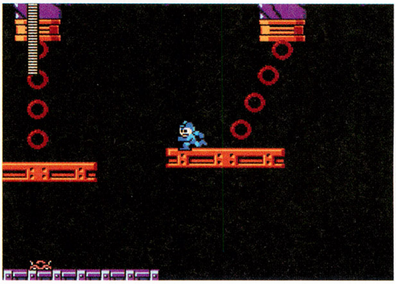
Will it use only two buttons and the Control Pad like in the NES days, or will it make use of additional controls?
You hold the Wii remote horizontally. Just like with the NES versions, the Control Pad controls Mega Man and the two buttons are Jump and Fire.

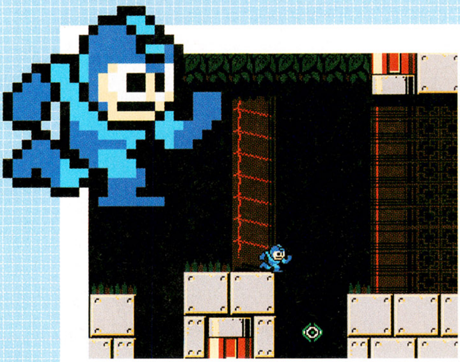
What new special forms of transportation will Mega Man have (akin to the Rush vehicles in Mega Man 3, for example)?
There aren't any new mechanical devices in the game, but fans will be happy to know that Rush is definitely in there. Since it's been 10 years since a classic Mega Man game has been released, we wanted to make sure some of the other classic characters were in it.

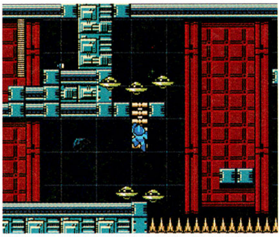
Why did you decide to adopt a retro look for the graphics rather than opt for upgraded visuals?
First off, we have a lot of fans who have wanted to play a new Mega Man game that was like the classic games, so we wanted to please them. Also with the current popularity of retro-gaming graphics on T-shirts and other paraphernalia, we thought the time was right to bring out an old-school game. We also went the extra mile in push-



Mega Man 9 is full of unique obstacles, such as giant pendulums that swing based on your movement.







By looking at the visuals, it's hard to tell if Mega Man 9 is a WiiWare game or a lost NES game. It's essentially both.

ing the upper limits of what 8-bit graphics can do, and we wanted players to be able to see that. Ultimately, it was our hope to make the art style used in this game an accepted one.

What will the music be like? Are you also going for an 8-bit feeling with the sound?
Everything down to the music and sound effects is all 8-bit style. The composer is one of the staff members who worked on Mega Man Zero with Inti Creates, and someone who worked on music for NES games was also involved. They're really staying true to the spirit of the 8-bit gaming era with this new game.

The story seems more in-depth than past Mega Man games. Is there more emphasis on the story? Will there be any cinema scenes?
There are some NES-style cut-scenes in this game. I'm sure when people see the opening scenes—new content with 8-bit graphics—they're going to be very excited.

What will the difficulty be like? Will there be any consideration given to those gamers whose reflexes aren't as good as they were 20 years ago?
I don't think we've held back on this one. Sure, some players may find their reflexes have slowed over the past 20 years, but the most important thing for us was re-creating the exact feel of the games from that period. That meant making sure the difficulty was as close to those games as possible. But we want players who don't think they're good at games like this anymore to give it a shot and remember how challenging they are, and, if they can, beat it. We've put a lot of stuff in there to give the players a real challenge. No one will find the game lacking in that regard.

Will any classic Robot Master bosses be returning, or maybe the cycloptic rock monster? What other classic nods will be included for longtime fans to enjoy?
No cycloptic rock monster in this one, but we do have some awesome bosses in store. Enemies like the Mets and Sniper Joes will be in there as well.

What kinds of themes or types of environments will the levels feature? What will be some of the level-specific hazards?
We have volcano, underwater, mid-air, and outer-space areas, along with anything that would suit an adventure game. We have planned out all kinds of obstacles, including springs that [launch you] from one to the next, and giant pendulums that form bridges you have to cross.

Will the levels be completely linear, or will there be branching paths and secret areas?
In the original NES series, there were branching paths. I don't know if there's anything you could consider a secret area, but we are planning some additional content.

Will there be any playable characters aside from Mega Man himself?
That's classified! You'll have to wait and see!

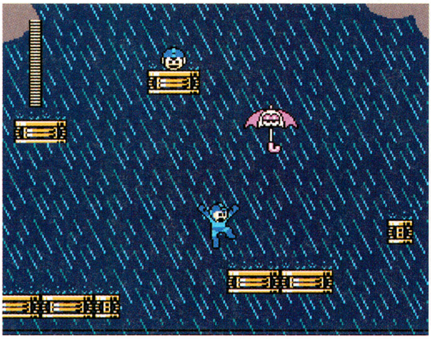
How big is the game's creative staff? Are any of the staff members from Mega Man 1 through 8 working on the title, aside from you?
There are about 20 people on the staff. That's pretty large-scale for an NES-style game. The staff has worked on things like Mega Man Zero, so they more than know how to do action games.

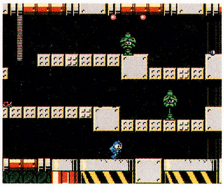
Do you feel any pressure trying to recapture the nostalgia that made the original games such a hit with fans?
I've felt more excitement than pressure. Being able to work on a new NES game brings back all the great memories and emotions from that time. It's like the floodgates have been opened and the ideas just keep coming!

Does the game contain any elements that you wanted to include in previous Mega Man games but were forced to cut for one reason or another?
This isn't really an answer to the question, but Mega Man fans give Mega Man 2 the most praise, and we wanted to surpass that. We weren't thinking about how 9 would look after 8, but how it would look following 1 or 2. We wanted to put out a fun game that gets back to basics.

Do you see this as being a one-shot project, or do you think there may be more classic Mega Man games in the future?
Personally, I'd like to do a whole lot more! That's why we need everyone's support!

Do you have a message for the Mega Man fans who have been waiting for this game for the past 10 years?
The moment you've all been waiting for is here! We're not just giving you Mega Man 9; we're also giving you a new NES game. This is a game that brings back the fun of old games, and I hope you all enjoy it!





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WANTED!

Earthbound and Mother take the readers' top slots once again! We think there might be a trend developing here.... The only surprise is that after struggling in a tie last month, The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask got bumped out of the top five entirely by Super Smash Bros. On the staff's list, Castlevania: Rondo of Blood has jumped to the top spot. Between Castlevania Judgment and Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia, we've got Castlevania fever!

EARTHBOUND
SUPER NINTENDO

READERS' MOST WANTED

1 Earthbound (Super NES)
2 Mother (NES/Japan only)
3 Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars (Super NES)
4 Chrono Trigger (Super NES)
5 Super Smash Bros. (N64)

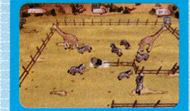
NP STAFF'S MOST WANTED

1 Castlevania: Rondo of Blood (TurboGrafx CD)
2 Mega Man: The Wily Wars (Sega Genesis)
3 Terranigma (Super NES)
4 Super Mario All-Stars (Super NES)
5 Super Punch-Out!! (Super NES)

What classic games do you want to see come to Virtual Console? Send us up to five picks at **vcpoll@futureus.com**. Remember, we only accept votes for systems currently represented on Virtual Console (so no GBA titles please!), and be sure that your suggestions aren't already available (OK, crazy Contra III fans?). We'll print the results in an upcoming issue. Note: This is for polling purposes only, and will in no way determine future Virtual Console releases.

DOWNLOAD STATION

WiiWare



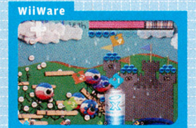
CRITTER ROUND-UP

PUBLISHER: KONAMI
GENRE: PUZZLE
Wii POINTS: 1000

A play on '80s arcade game Qix, Critter Round-Up has you isolating animals by type by building fences in a pen. If you come into contact with a critter, you lose a life—which is hard to take when your nemesis is a rabbit, but believable when you're face-to-teeth with a crocodile. Some animal types are difficult to distinguish from one another and some of the settings are too dark, but overall it's a good update of a classic. —GEORGE S.

Hmmm...

WiiWare



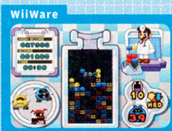
DEFEND YOUR CASTLE

PUBLISHER: XGEN STUDIOS
GENRE: ACTION
Wii POINTS: 500

Graphics that look like construction-paper cutouts support simple but fun grab-and-throw play as you defend a fortress from stick-figure marauders. The player who scores highest in a co-op game decides which upgrades to make between rounds. The challenge for Normal difficulty kicks in after about 20 rounds, but Heroic difficulty will make your head spin from the beginning. —GEORGE S.

Recommended

WiiWare



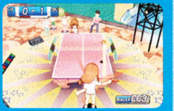
DR. MARIO ONLINE RX

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: PUZZLE
Wii POINTS: 1000

Don't tell my boss, but I probably spent way too much time this issue playing Dr. Mario Online Rx. True, the color-matching gameplay isn't quite as accessible as, say, Tetris, and the standard mode isn't much different from previous Dr. Mario games, but it sure is addictive, and the online versus play is a great way to test your skills. The all-new motion-based Virus Buster mode is fun, too, especially in co-op. —CHRIS H.

Recommended

WiiWare



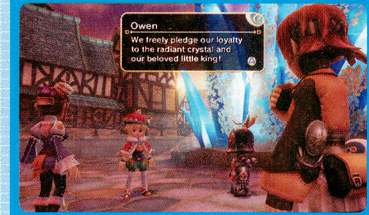
FAMILY TABLE TENNIS

PUBLISHER: AKSYS
GENRE: SPORTS
Wii POINTS: 500

Though four members of a generic family serve up the action instead of Miis, Family Table Tennis is a good companion to Wii Sports Tennis thanks to similar motion control. Three minigames add depth and four colorful settings lend atmosphere. The game has no options for handedness, but a lefty should be able to pick it up as easily as a right-handed player. —GEORGE S.

Recommended

WiiWare



Owen
We freely pledge our loyalty to the radiant crystal and our beloved little king!

FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES: MY LIFE AS A KING

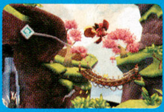
PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX • **GENRE:** RPG/SIM • **Wii POINTS:** 1500

Casey L's Pick

Why be the questing hero when you can be the king arranging the quests? My Life as a King turns the tables on the Final Fantasy formula, leaving the adventurers to battle offscreen while you build a kingdom one structure at a time. Transforming barren fields into a bustling metropolis is as addictive as it is satisfying, and the production values are phenomenal. The $15 price tag and $25 in optional add-ons may cause some sticker shock, but don't let that dissuade you—you'll get a lot of game for the money. —CASEY L.

Recommended

WiiWare



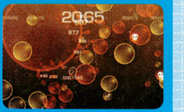
LOSTWINDS

PUBLISHER: FRONTIER
GENRE: ADVENTURE
Wii POINTS: 1000

LostWinds begins like a conventional platformer, but takes an Okami-esque turn by allowing players to propel hero Toku through his colorful world with breezes, gusts, and vortices of wind generated by the Wii remote. It's a ton of fun while it lasts, but with only a few hours of content, its imaginative gameplay and satisfying puzzles left me hungry for a whole lot more. Hopefully a future sequel will be a little less short, and every bit as sweet. —CASEY L.

Recommended

WiiWare



POP

PUBLISHER: NNOOO
GENRE: PUZZLE
Wii POINTS: 700

The name says it all. As bubbles of four colors or shapes float up in an unstoppable fizz, you pop them. Chains increase your score and hits add seconds to a quickly ticking clock. Unfortunately the game ends up much too short for beginners, resulting in more time spent looking at the scoreboard than playing. If you stick to it, you'll get past the tuning issues. —GEORGE S.

Grumble Grumble

20

YEARS OF NINTENDO POWER
1988 - 2008

©1985 Nintendo.

1988
20
YEARS OF
NINTENDO
POWER
2008

©2008 Nintendo.

WiiWare

PROTÖTHEA

PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **1000**

In case five minutes of Star Soldier R isn't enough for you, Protöthea offers a full-length shooter in the vein of Geometry Wars: Galaxies, using a similar control scheme that allows you to fly and shoot independently. Protöthea lacks Geometry Wars' addictive nature, however, offering a fun arsenal of weapons but repetitive levels, dull bosses, and a frustrating lack of midstage continue points. You can find a dozen better shooters on Virtual Console. —**CASEY L.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare

STAR SOLDIER R

PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **800**

Star Soldier R is a lot of fun—while it lasts. Your ship's movement is silky-smooth, there are cool power-ups to acquire, and there's a ton to shoot at. The problem? The game is literally only five minutes long. Sure, I understand the idea of playing through the game's two levels over and over, perfecting your skills and going for a high score, but that's a tough sell for 800 points. If Hudson delivers a full game like this I'll be all over it. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare

TOKI TORI

PUBLISHER: **TWO TRIBES**
GENRE: **ACTION/PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **1000**

Originally a Game Boy Color title, this charming puzzle-platformer holds up pretty well. The WiiWare version benefits from a major graphical overhaul, of course, but most of the appeal still lies in the timeless qualities of clever level design and a satisfying difficulty curve. The game offers both pointer-based and traditional controls, and a variety of items helps to keep things fresh. Fans of games like Lost Vikings should definitely check it out. —**STEVE T.**

Recommended

WiiWare

Which flag does Austin Powers have painted on his car?

TV SHOW KING

PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT**
GENRE: **PARTY**
Wii POINTS: **1000**

TV Show King's clever quiz-show format lets you wait to see how other Miis answer multiple-choice questions. But the longer you wait, the fewer points you earn. Luck plays a part when contestants spin a wheel for a chance to steal points. Graphics and sound are at an appropriate level of game-show cheese and the questions come in three well-defined difficulty levels. —**GEORGE S.**

Recommended

WiiWare

V.I.P. CASINO: BLACKJACK

PUBLISHER: **HIGH VOLTAGE**
GENRE: **CASINO**
Wii POINTS: **700**

As advertised, V.I.P. Casino: Blackjack gives you straight-up 21 in a backroom setting. A $1,000 bet limit ensures that you'll never be too lucky or unlucky on a given hand. If you do go on a lucky streak or if you just stay at the table, you'll tick off entries on a list of 22 achievements. Gameplay is solid, but decidedly low-stakes. —**GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

Virtual Console

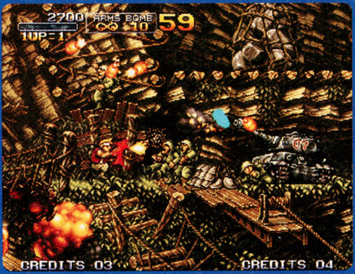
CITY CONNECTION

PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **JALECO**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1988**

Your goal in this bizarre driving-platforming hybrid is to cover every inch of highway—turning it white in the process—while avoiding giant kitty-cats that make your car explode upon impact. The arcade-style simplicity is akin to Donkey Kong or Pac-Man, but the core concept isn't nearly as compelling and the stiff controls certainly don't do it any favors. —**STEVE T.**

Grumble Grumble

Virtual Console



METAL SLUG

PLATFORM: **NEOGEO** • PUBLISHER: **D4/SNK**
GENRE: **SHOOTER** • ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1996**

Chris H's Pick

More than 10 years after it hit arcades, the original Metal Slug continues to impress. The co-op run-and-gun action is excellent, and the detailed animation still looks fantastic. Granted, there's little reason to download this version if you already own Metal Slug Anthology on a Wii disc, but it does sport a few improvements, including Classic controller support and a more-balanced difficulty level. This is a great introduction to a great series.

Recommended

Virtual Console

NINJA COMBAT

PLATFORM: **NEOGEO**
PUBLISHER: **D4/SNK**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1990**

Say hello to Joe and Hayabusa—the worst ninjas in the world. Not only do they wear brightly colored outfits and have no concept of stealth, but they tend to get defeated—a lot. Ninja Combat would be superfrustrating if it weren't for the infinite continues, which instead guarantee that anyone can beat the game on their first playthrough. It's good for mindless co-op action, but little else. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

Virtual Console

SKYKID

PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **SUNSOFT/ NAMCO BANDAI**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1987**

Though this simple shooter hardly stacks up to the intensity of modern fare, it's still a lot of fun. There's something inherently charming about the unique setting (you control a biplane), catchy music, and Pac-Man cameos—and flying with a friend makes it even better. Unusual gameplay aspects—such as bombing bases—further separates this from the pack. —**CHRIS H.**

Recommended

THIS MONTH IN PREVIEWS

GHOSTBUSTERS PG. 27
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MAJOR MINOR'S MAJESTIC MARCH PG. 29
MARIO SUPER SLUGGERS PG. 26
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NEW INTERNATIONAL TRACK AND FIELD PG. 28
TECMO BOWL: KICKOFF PG. 28

Play Ball!

>MARIO SUPER SLUGGERS

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI** • RELEASE: **TBA**

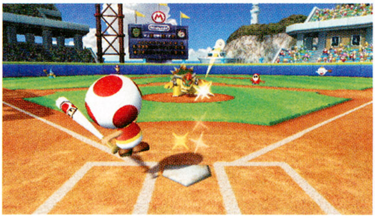
During the first hands-on demo of Mario Super Sluggers in North America, we learned that a lot has changed since Mario last trotted onto the diamond in Mario Superstar Baseball for GameCube. The most significant change is that the earlier game's thumb calisthenics have been replaced by free-swinging Wii remote action, but there's much more for baseball fans and Mario fans alike to get excited about!

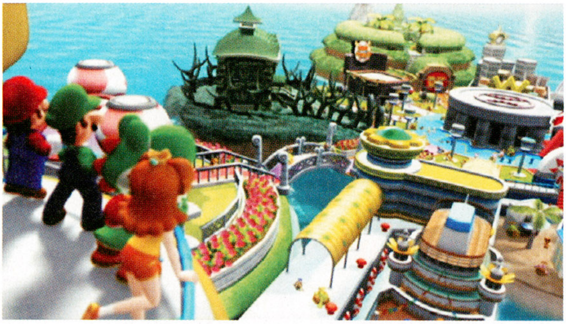
Our scouting report begins with a look at the on-field talent: Mario, Luigi, Peach, Yoshi, Wario, and Donkey Kong are just some of the Baseball Kingdom's 30 characters (and in some modes, your Miis can enter the fun). Characters are ranked in four skill areas—hitting, pitching, fielding, and speed—to help you field a great squad. Team captains such as Mario and Peach boast additional special moves, home fields, and home-field advantages.

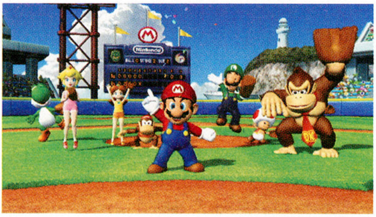
Getting the most out of this lineup comes down to how well you handle the Wii remote. (An advanced control option will allow players to use the nunchuk for greater control of some aspects of the game, too.) Think of your hand's motion with the Wii remote as the batter's backswing or the pitcher's windup followed by the forward motion of the swing or pitch. A circular timing meter that shrinks to a dot can help you maximize a pitch or swing. Star Skills—available once you've collected enough stars—are powerful pitches and bat swings unique to each character. Fielding and base-running skills most often depend on speed generated by shaking the remote vigorously. Spectacular plays, such as one fielder boosting another into the air to snag the ball, are possible if the chemistry between characters is good.

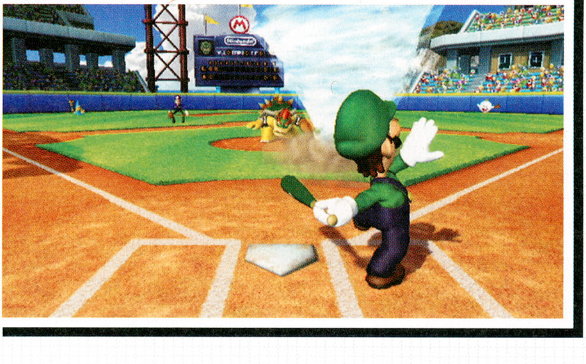
But lest you think Mario Super Sluggers is just about on-field heroics in the nine ballparks, think again. In the single-player Challenge mode, you'll explore the Baseball Kingdom, hoping to recruit additional characters by completing baseball-themed challenges. Unique character capabilities—such as Mario's ability to travel via warp pipes—gives you access to new areas of the Kingdom. As for minigames, we sampled several for four players, all of them fun and frantic. The Toy Field mode is a multiplayer hitting and fielding contest; there's also a Training mode plus an area to view records.

The Mario Super Sluggers version we played was still in development and no official North American release date had been set at press time, but we'll keep you posted. —SCOTT P.







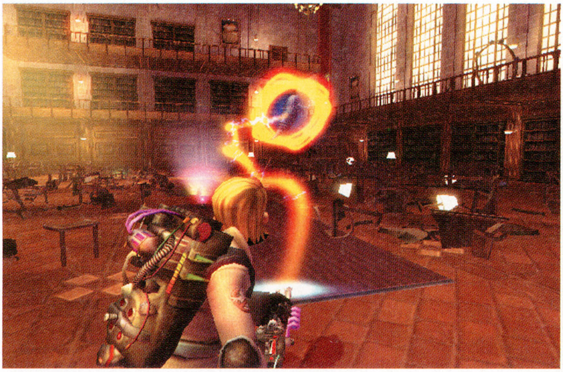


Bustin' Makes Me Feel Good

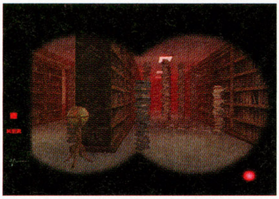
>GHOSTBUSTERS

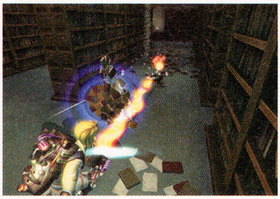
PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)** • PUBLISHER: **SIERRA**
DEVELOPER: **RED FLY** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

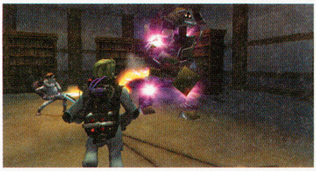
Everybody's seen the classic comedy *Ghostbusters*. This October you'll get a chance to live it when it comes to Wii. Set three years after *Ghostbusters II*, the game is a direct sequel to the hit films; the Ghostbusters are now a government-sanctioned organization, Walter Peck is their official liaison, and you, as the newest member of the group, are the Ghostbusters' experimental-equipment technician (aka the expendable guy). By aiming with the Wii remote and pressing B, you'll get to blast specters with the Ghostbusters' trademark proton guns, then drag them into traps that you'll set by holding Z and making an underhanded throwing motion with the nunchuk. In addition, you'll get to use new weapons such as a shotgunlike dark-matter generator and a ghost-freezing stasis beam. As you face New York's latest supernatural happenings, you'll visit haunts new and old, including the New York Public Library and the Sedgewick Hotel, and encounter familiar foes including Slimer, Mr. Stay-Puft, and big baddie Gozer. Luckily, the other Ghostbusters will be there to lend a hand (they're even voiced by the movie's original cast), plus a second player can join in at any time. The game also features competitive multiplayer modes for up to four players. In addition, Ghostbusters is coming to DS in a completely different form—a top-down action game in which you'll control all four Ghostbusters as well as their Ecto-1 vehicle. —CHRIS H.

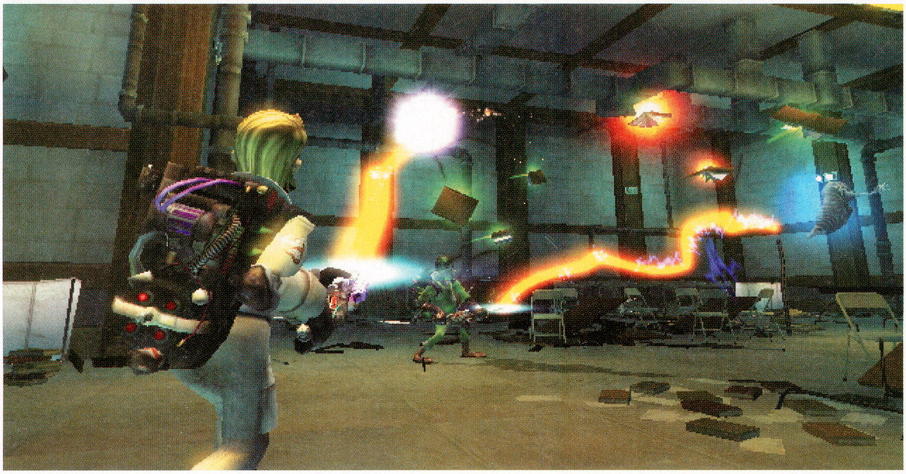


Ghostbusters on Wii shares voiceovers and basic game design with other console versions, but features its own unique visual style for characters and environments.







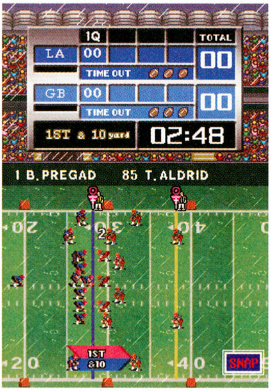


Big Return

> TECMO BOWL: KICKOFF

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **TECMO**
DEVELOPER: **POLYGON MAGIC** • RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2008**

Before a certain puffy commentator became synonymous with video game football, armchair quarterbacks across the country worshipped at the church of Tecmo Bowl. After hanging up its cleats for more than a decade, the storied franchise returns this September to bring its trademark brand of fast-paced, arcade-style pigskin to the DS. Like its predecessors, Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff pares down the playbook and simplifies the onfield action so you don't need an advanced degree in cover-two defense in order to compete. Explosive plays are the norm, turnovers often reach double digits, and a lead is rarely safe no matter how sizable. Though the game lacks an official NFL license, you can customize every aspect of your team, as well as the names and abilities of individual players. (The first thing we're gonna do is re-create Tecmo Bowl legend the "Nigerian Nightmare" Christian Okoye.) Touch-screen controls worked well during our play test (tap a receiver to pass, scribble over the ball carrier to break a tackle, etc.), but you can switch to the Control Pad and buttons at any time. Wi-Fi play is also included, so we'll see you on the gridiron. —STEVE T.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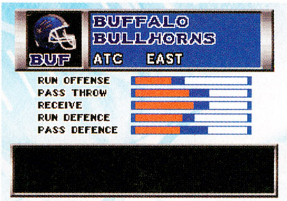
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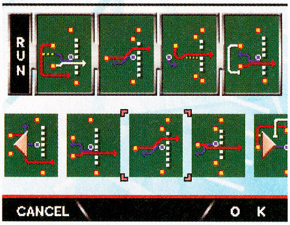
BULLHORNS
BUF
ATC
EAST
RUN OFFENSE
PASS THROW
RECEIVE
RUN DEFENCE
PASS DEFENCE

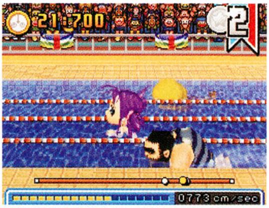

RUN
CANCEL
OK

Play the Field

> NEW INTERNATIONAL TRACK AND FIELD

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **SUMO DIGITAL** • RELEASE: **SUMMER 2008**

New International Track and Field is a prime example of a publisher reinventing a classic franchise for modern times. The core gameplay that people loved about the original Track and Field—adrenaline-pumping competition across a wide array of Olympic-style events—is back, now brought up to spec with character designs by UDON (makers of the Street Fighter comic book) and revamped touch-driven controls. The game features more than 20 events, including the 100-meter dash, weightlifting, pole vaulting, skeet shooting, swimming, and archery, many of which require you to rub your stylus back and forth rapidly on the touch screen to build up speed or power, then use timed button presses to take action (such as jumping hurdles or throwing your javelin at the correct angle). You can even yell into the mic to cheer on your athlete and improve your performance. Classic Konami characters such as Simon Belmont, Pyramid Head, Frogger, and Sparkster also show up, complete with their own specialized minigames, and you can test yourself online via numerous versus options. —CHRIS H.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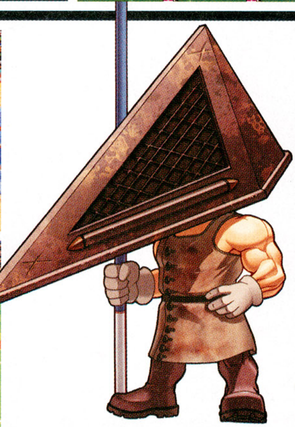

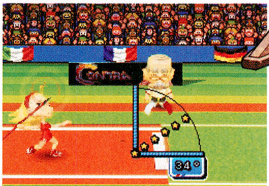

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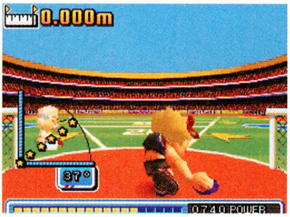
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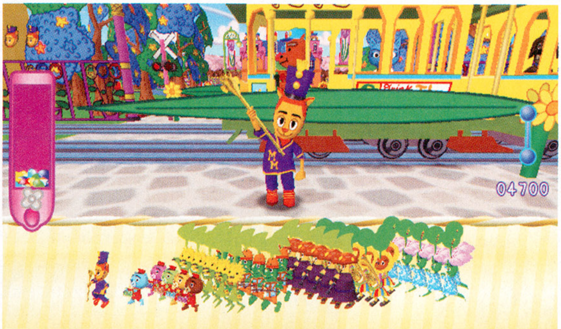
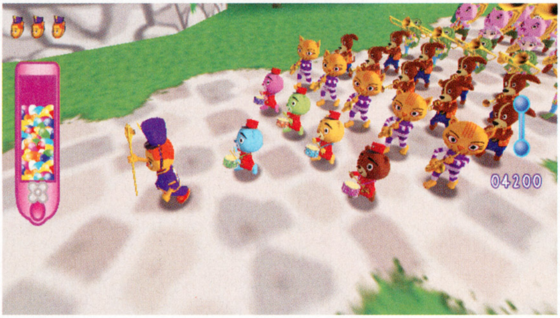


The Beat Is On

> MAJOR MINOR'S MAJESTIC MARCH

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **NANAON-SHA** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

What do you get when you combine the unbridled creativity of PaRappa the Rapper creators Masaya Matsuura and Rodney Alan Greenblat with the innovative possibilities of Wii? You get Major Minor's Majestic March, a whimsical, unique rhythm game in which you move the Wii remote like a conductor's baton to assemble and guide your own marching band. As these screenshots reveal, the game has undergone some significant changes since it was announced a few months ago—main character Major Mike Minor is no longer a round-faced human (as he appeared in V. 226), but now resembles a kitty-cat. Regardless of how he looks, he'll be using his special baton to maintain the tempo of more than 25 marching tunes through eight stages, adding band members to his procession as he goes. Each stage has its own unique band members—in the first stage you recruit animals, in the second you enlist plants, and in the third you're joined by insects. Sure, it sounds unusual—that's one of the reasons we can't wait to see more. —**CHRIS H.**



FAMILY PLAYTIME

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DOMINOES
SINK THE SHIPS
FOUR-IN-A-ROW
REVERSI
FACE CREATOR
Link It Up!
TELEGAMES
ULTIMATE
PUZZLE GAMES
1001 PUZZLES!
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KRISS-KROSS
NUMBER JIG
WORDSEARCH
BACKWORDS
CODEBREAKERS
CRYPTICS
and MANY MORE!
Link It Up!
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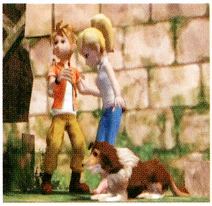
PREVIEW
AUGUST '08

In Ship Shape

> LOST IN BLUE: SHIPWRECKED

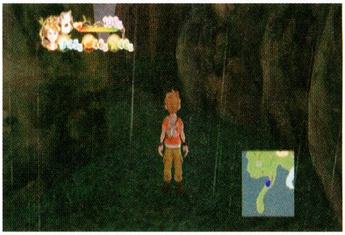
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

We've always been big fans of the premise behind Konami's Lost in Blue games, but the series' DS installments have had a hard time balancing the adventure elements with the needs of daily survival. In Lost in Blue: Shipwrecked, the developers aim not only to correct that balance, but also to add an extra helping of fun through newly implemented Wii controls. As the game's title implies, you play as a shipwreck survivor—you can choose a male or female character—and it's up to you to get yourself and your fellow castaway off the island you're stranded on. To do so, you'll have to use the Wii controllers in a variety of ways, such as moving the remote and nunchuk alternately up and down to start a fire, making a paddling motion with the remote to control a raft, and swinging the remote to chop meat—there are nearly 40 motion-based minigames in all. The game also supports co-op play, and there's an unlockable multiplayer mission mode in which you can hunt for treasure or escape from an exploding volcano, among other tasks. —CHRIS H.



Phew. I found you!
I was all alone!
I didn't know what to do!

I'm Aidan Sanders. We were on that ship, too.

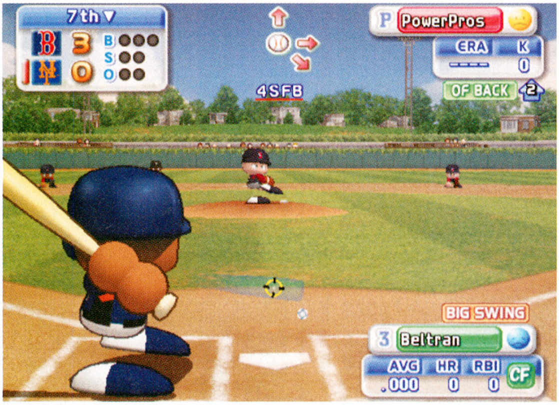


Major League Potential

> MLB POWER PROS 2008

PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)** • PUBLISHER: **2K SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **KONAMI** • RELEASE: **JULY 2008**

Konami's Power Pros series is a strange duck. It combines simple gameplay and cartoony visuals with copious stat tracking, comprehensive team-management options, and a staggering selection of game modes. The franchise's calling card is the RPG-like Success mode, in which you create your own player and guide his quest to the big leagues. That involves not only honing his skills, but dealing with such off-the-field matters as finding a part-time job and courting potential love interests. This year's edition lets you enjoy the fruits of that labor through the new MLB Life mode. Once your player makes it to the show, you can transfer him to MLB Life and follow his entire big-league career, from the first day of spring training to his retirement ceremony. As with Success mode, the on-field action is restricted to your own player's at bats; the rest of your time is spent negotiating contracts, scoring endorsement deals, and taking care of the family. A DS version is also in the works. —STEVE T.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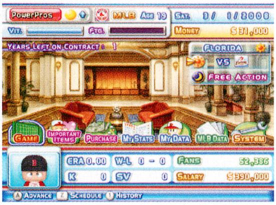
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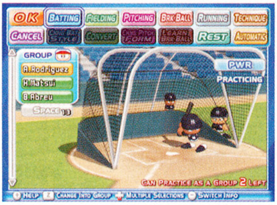
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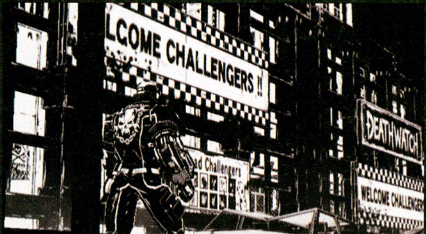
IT'S A MAD WORLD AFTER ALL

Sega and PlatinumGames join forces for one of the year's most shockingly original Wii games.

Let's get this out of the way up front: MadWorld is intended for mature audiences only. If you're under 17 years of age, we urge you to skip ahead to one of this month's many other exciting features. For the rest of you, read on for an exclusive in-depth look at one of the craziest, most over-the-top action games in recent memory.

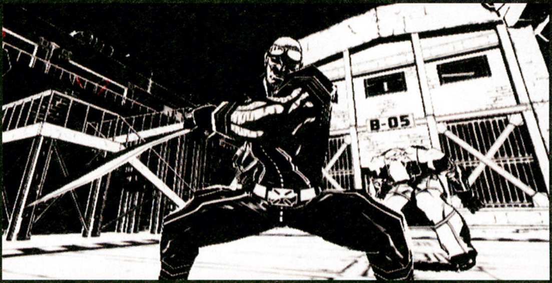


As we sit down with MadWorld producer Atsushi Inaba and director Shigenori Nishikawa, the two are still recovering from a long night of celebration. The evening before, at an event announcing its new partnership with PlatinumGames, Sega rolled out the red carpet (literally) for these game-development veterans and their colleagues. It was there that Inaba and Nishikawa finally unveiled their latest project to the world. And though the demo lasted only a minute or two, the assembled media erupted with enthusiastic applause. It was a response that provided considerable relief for the creatively daring duo. After all, a game that lets you rip the still-beating heart from your opponent's chest is a far cry from the family-friendly fare for which Wii is predominantly known. "I was really happy to hear everyone getting excited for the game," says Inaba. "It gives us confidence that we're going in the right direction."

After witnessing an extended demonstration of what MadWorld has to offer, we're pretty confident in the team's direction as well. The game is every bit as stylish, inventive, and daringly unique as you'd expect from the folks who brought us Viewtiful Joe and Okami. The first thing that jumps out at you, of course, is the stark black-and-white (with "splashes" of red) visual style. The second is the outlandish brutality. Gruff protagonist Jack has been forced to participate in a lethal game show known as Death Watch, where the objective is to score points by dispatching your opponents in the most entertaining way possible. And our hero displays no lack of showmanship. He impales an enemy on a wall of spikes (called a "rose bush" in the game), not just once, but four or five times to make sure

BY STEVE THOMASON

the job's done right. He dumps an opponent into a flaming oil barrel then hurls it at a larger group of foes. Our personal favorite: Jack rips a signpost out of the ground and firmly plants it through some fool's cranium, then watches as the understandably disoriented man staggers across the street. Best of all, it's actually a caution sign that ironically warns of such occurrences.



Jack may be one bad dude, but he's not afraid to get his pose on once in a while.

That sense of humor is an important component of MadWorld. The mayhem is so ludicrous and portrayed with such gleeful excess that it hits you as laugh-out-loud funny rather than creepy or disturbing. "Extravagance is really necessary to fall on the right side of that line," insists Inaba. "We don't want this game to be dark and serious. One of the games that I played to better understand what constitutes 'serious' violence was Manhunt 2. And although I personally like that type of game, when violence is portrayed so simply, that's when it becomes more serious and dark. When it's over the top and extravagant, it feels much more acceptable. That over-the-top expression is what makes it funny. That's why people laugh when they see the violence in this game. It's not realistic. Nothing like this would ever happen in real life, which is what games should be offering to the audience." Because the game is being developed primarily for a Western audience, the team is making a concerted effort to find out what tickles our funny bone on this side of the Pacific.

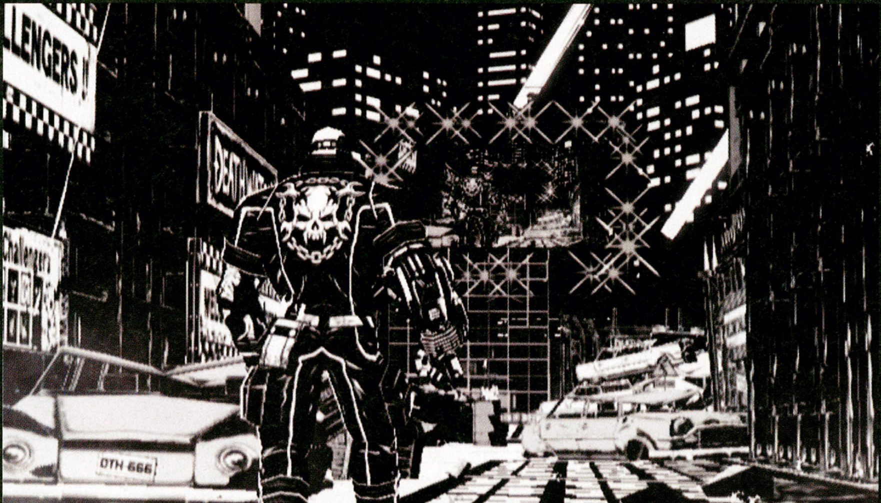
"We talk a lot about what will make Americans laugh," says Nishikawa. "We go through a lot of American comics and movies to learn what kind of over-the-top violence is out there and what we might be able to incorporate into the game. We're always looking for something that's so extreme and unrealistic that it's funny. We have many, many meetings about how to get that just right. It's a lot of work!"

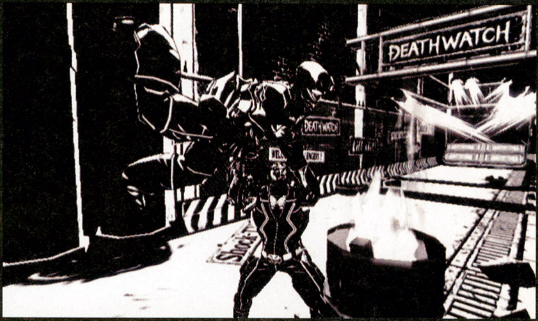
HEAVY METAL

For the rare occasion when Jack can't find something in his surroundings with which to eliminate an opponent, our protagonist can take a more direct approach courtesy of the chainsaw attached to his arm. Basic attacks are performed by simply pressing the A Button, but to cut down your foes with a bit more panache you press the B Button to instigate a finishing maneuver, then follow the onscreen prompts with various movements of the Wii remote. Motion controls also come into play when interacting with each stage's assortment of death traps, and the team is taking special care to get the feel just right. "We start out by deciding which moves we want to put in the game, then the team discusses the best way to implement those moves utilizing the controller," says Nishikawa, who knows a thing or two about chainsaws, having worked as a designer on Resident Evil 4. "We want to make it as intuitive as possible."

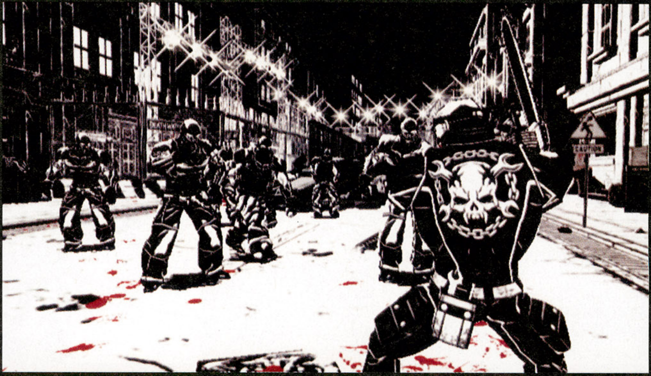
Over the course of the game, you'll also have the opportunity to purchase additional weapons from armories scattered throughout Death Watch. During our demo, Jack acquires a pair of long daggers that allows for faster attacks and its own unique array of grisly finishers. He can thrust one blade into an enemy's chest, the other through his waist, then lift the guy overhead

Like Okami before it, MadWorld exemplifies what can be accomplished with inspired art direction. If only more developers were willing to take these kinds of risks.





[Left] With oil prices skyrocketing, Jack discovers an alternative energy source. [Below] The smart money's on the guy with the chainsaw.

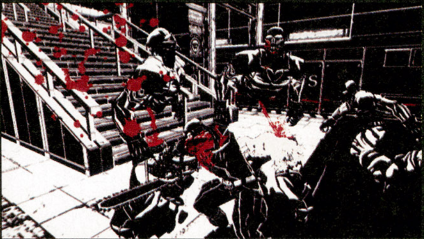


and liberate his legs from his torso. For something a bit more graceful, our hero can use the daggers to knock an opponent into the air then relieve him of all four limbs before the poor sap hits the ground. Yet another finisher involves excising an opponent's spine. You get the idea. According to Inaba, such implements of carnage will be plentiful. "Having just one or two weapons wouldn't be much fun," opines the producer, "so we intend to include lots of weapons."

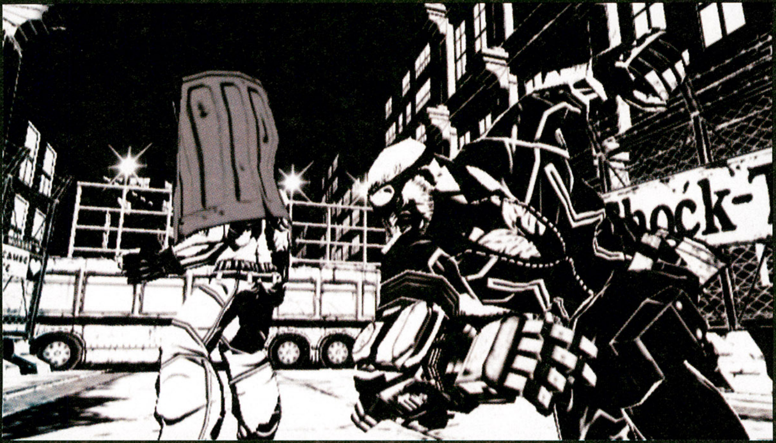
MadWorld's leading man isn't the only contestant loaded for bear, though. At one point, we see him run into a hulking adversary who's packing a chainsaw of his own, and the ensuing battle is...well, about as awesome as you'd expect a chainsaw duel to be. It ends with the two locking power tools, and if you manage to shake the Wii remote vigorously enough, Jack removes his opponent's oversized noggin, which he can pick up and "transplant" to a smaller enemy's shoulders (leaving the guy to stumble around under the unmanageable weight of his new comically huge cranium).

Unsurprisingly, MadWorld's focus on dishing out beatings is absolute; don't expect any moving-crate puzzles or missions that send you rummaging for keys. "I'm not that smart, so I can't design puzzle-heavy games," jokes Nishikawa. "Besides, we wanted to create a game that would allow players to have a lot of fun in short chunks. And that's easier to deliver in a pure action game." Inaba adds, "This is an easy game to just pick up and play. You don't have to think about anything." But that doesn't mean they can't mix things up once in a while. From time to time Jack will have the opportunity to participate in hilariously gruesome minigames called Bloodbath Challenges. Inaba and Nishikawa showed us two such diversions, and the first may very well be the greatest invention since the automobile, due in no small part to its name: Man Darts. As a gigantic dartboard rises out of the street, Jack picks up a baseball bat and starts knocking foes toward it. The closer one of these human projectiles hits to the bulls-eye, of course, the more points he's worth. The other Bloodbath Challenge we saw was Death Press, which tasks Jack with hurling as many enemies as possible under a very large, spike-covered hydraulic press within a given time limit. Aside from them being wildly entertaining, we ask what purpose these minigames might serve. "It's a way to gain more points," reveals Nishikawa, "But there is a gambling aspect to it. When you play a Bloodbath Challenge, you have to pay a certain number of points. Then it's up to you to see if you can gain more points than what you paid. On top of that, we are considering some sort of [additional] reward for getting a high score."

Of course, a key ingredient of any great action game is memorable boss battles, and though the team isn't ready to show them off just yet, they promise that



This isn't what it looks like. These guys are just helping Jack prepare for the World Lumberjack Championship.



You've got to admire Jack's "can-do" attitude. [Editor's note: we'd like to formally apologize for the preceding caption.]

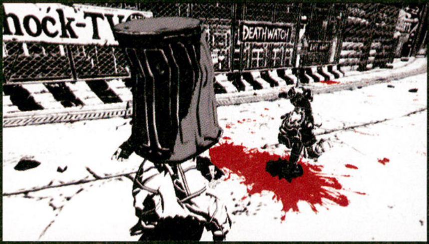
MadWorld's will indeed leave an impact. "We're making all of the boss characters very unique so that when players see them, each one will be etched in their minds forever," says Nishikawa. That means upping the ante on both the visual and gameplay fronts. "As you saw, the action and the environments in the regular stages are very extravagant," points out Inaba. "So we know that we need to make the boss battles even more so."

PAINT THE TOWN RED

Death Watch takes place throughout MadWorld's fictional city, with each area representing it's own level. We had the opportunity to see two of the game's locales in action: the dilapidated city streets shown in the previously released screenshots and a never-before-seen train station. The latter boasts a number of it own unique environmental interactions, including the option to stand at the edge of a platform and hold an enemy out over the tracks as a train zooms by. It also looks amazing, and demonstrates the team's efforts to give each stage a distinct look despite the lack of color.

Which brings us back to MadWorld's unconventional aesthetic. Though it won't be finished until some time next year, the game is already one of the most visually stunning on Wii, both from a technical and an artistic standpoint. You can see the astonishing level of detail in the screens on these pages, but the game looks even better in motion as smooth animation and fantastic use of light and shadow make this beautifully atypical world come alive. It truly is unlike anything you've seen before in a video game.

Asked how the team arrived at this bold new look, Inaba responds, "Since 'violence' is the main theme of the game, we didn't want to make it very realistic. There are a lot of games out there that use a cartoony visual style to alleviate that violence, but [if we did that] it would just look like any other game. So we were fooling around with different visual styles and toning down the colors, and when we came all the way down to black and white, we thought it was really impactful. Then when we started moving forward with this black-and-white style, we realized that keeping the blood red had the effect of coloring the screen as you play the game, which really makes [the aesthetic] stand out even more." He admits that Frank Miller's Sin City graphic novels were also a strong inspiration. "As a designer, the thought of taking Sin City into 3-D and letting the player move around in it seemed very exciting." That influence is made particularly



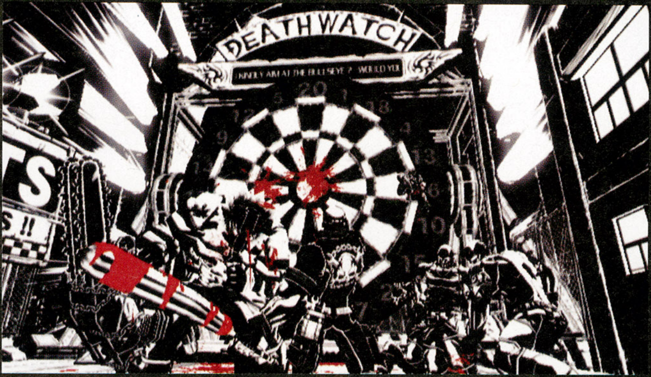
GOING PLATINUM

You may not be familiar with PlatinumGames, but this young development studio has one heck of a pedigree. Founded by former members of Capcom's now-defunct Clover Studio, the group is led by Atsushi Inaba, Hideki Kamiya, and Shinji Mikami, whose works include the Resident Evil series, Viewtiful Joe, Okami, and Devil May Cry. Though the studio remains independent, Platinum recently signed an exclusive four-game publishing deal with Sega, which covers MadWorld and the upcoming DS space epic Infinite Line (more on that one in a future issue). Asked how this partnership came about, Inaba replies, "Our philosophy isn't, 'We want to make X type of game,' but rather 'We want to develop games in a certain way.' The process is important. That's what spurred us to go independent from a big publisher. But becoming independent means you need to partner with a publisher. What we value most when choosing that partner is not how much money we can get from them, but who will partner with us to realize our vision. The other thing that we were looking for from a publisher was freedom; the level of freedom that a publisher gives us to be able to create the games that we want. That freedom is very important to us. And on those two points, it was a unanimous decision that Sega would be the best partner."

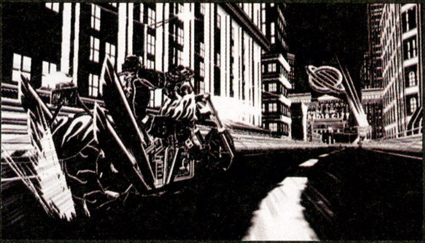
evident by the comic-book-style text that pops up to accompany certain sound effects (such as "Splaaaaat!").

As for Jack himself, a lot of thought went into the character's distinctive design. "Due to the game's content, we didn't think that someone who was slimmer or a handsome, pretty-boy type would be a good fit," says Inaba, who has experience creating memorably unorthodox heroes as the former producer of Viewtiful Joe. "From the outset, we knew that we needed someone who looked big and tough." Nishikawa concurs, adding, "We wanted someone who you could tell reeked of oil. Someone who has been worn down by the world." In other words, this isn't a man you want to mess with.

The game's audio matches that attitude with some suitably meaty sound effects (who doesn't love the sweet purr of a revved-up chainsaw?) and a harsh rock soundtrack that gets you in the mood to wreak havoc. In keeping with the game show motif, the action will also be accompanied by color commentary. What we heard during our demo was just placeholder material provided by members of the development team, but it was pretty funny stuff (and very, very blue). We only hope that the team records enough lines to prevent the voiceovers from becoming too repetitive.



We would like to propose Man Darts for inclusion in the 2012 Olympic games.



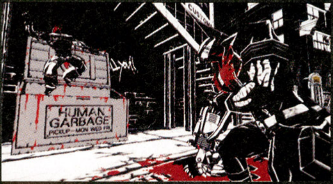
MARCHING TO A DIFFERENT BEATING

The folks that comprise PlatinumGames have a track record of pushing boundaries and moving the medium forward like few other developers—a legacy they clearly intend to build upon with MadWorld. What's more, Inaba hopes to not only provide current Wii owners with something fresh and different, but to draw new users to the platform as well. "There's always a particular audience for each console," says the producer. "For Wii, it's families. Nintendo's direction has been to provide software that's more family-oriented and kid-friendly. That's probably why you see primarily that kind of content on the system. So you have to be very brave to go against that tide."

One commonly held notion that Nishikawa is especially eager to dispel is that only certain game genres are appropriate for Wii. "When it comes to the Wii controller, people intuitively think it doesn't work well for action games," says the director. "They typically hold the stereotype that the Xbox 360 and PlayStation controllers, which have lots of buttons, are more relevant for action games. I want to change that stereotype. As we've been developing this title, we've come to believe that the Wii controller is actually more intuitive and more relevant for action games."

Perhaps most importantly, Inaba sees this project as the epitome of what his upstart studio is all about. "Of all the new titles we're developing [at PlatinumGames], MadWorld is the one with which we want to challenge ourselves the most," says Inaba. "It's the one with which we want to make the biggest impact on the industry." And in a world gone mad for sequels and licensed cash-ins, that's music to our ears.

[Below] For olfactory reasons, it seems like daily pickups would be preferable.



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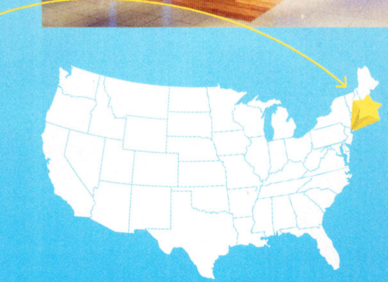

Put on your finest white gloves and wax your mustache, because you're invited to the Nintendo World store for a Nintendo Power party 20 years in the making!

When we open the doors at 8:30am, the first 400 people in line with any issue of Nintendo Power will cross the velvet rope into our private party. (Come dressed as a Nintendo character for a chance to win prizes!) Partygoers will play new Wii and Nintendo DS games, hang out with the Nintendo Power staff, and walk away with lots of free goodies.

The best part is that it's all for a good cause. In appreciation for your support for Nintendo Power these past 20 years, gaming companies such as CDV and Gamecock are raising awareness and funding for the Starlight Starbright Children's Foundation, which brings games and much more to seriously ill kids and their families. Be sure to come out and show your support!

Want to attend but live too far away? You're not out of the party yet! Keep your eyes peeled for a special opportunity next issue!

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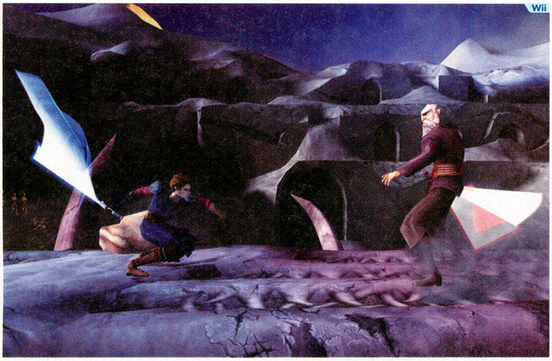
Two Clone Wars games are on the way, but they're not clones of each other. LucasArts presents Star Wars The Clone Wars: Lightsaber Duels on Wii and Star Wars The Clone Wars: Jedi Alliance on DS.

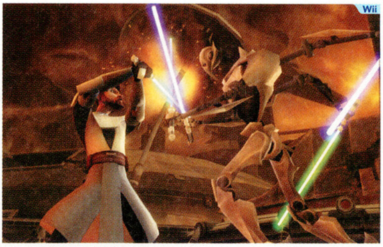
BY JUSTIN CHENG

WAR GAMES

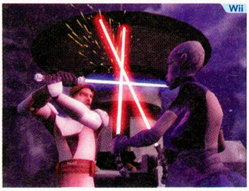
"Begun the Clone War has," Yoda said at the end of *Attack of the Clones*, marking the start of a conflict that would then end in *Revenge of the Sith*. But what happened between those two films? A lot, apparently, as the upcoming *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* film, television show, and video games will prove. Yes, the Clone Wars are coming to Wii and DS exclusively, offering two very different experiences.

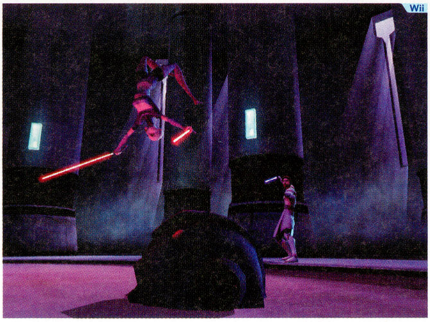
"The Wii game is all about duels, as you can imagine with a name like Lightsaber Duels," says LucasArts marketing manager Gavin Leung. "You can play all the most memorable lightsaber duels from the *Clone Wars* movie and series." In other words, Star Wars The Clone Wars: Lightsaber Duels

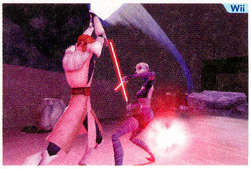




The voice actors from the film and the TV series reprise their roles in both games. The plot is furthered via banter during combat in Lightsaber Duels, whereas there are cut-scenes—some of which are interactive—in Jedi Alliance. The dialogue changes based on which characters you choose.







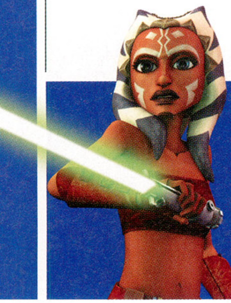
is a one-on-one fighting game, not the third-person action-adventure game fans may have been expecting. However, unlike LucasArts's previous attempt at a fighting game—1997's Star Wars: Masters of Teräs Käsi on PlayStation—this one promises to truly replicate what it's like to be a Jedi or a Sith, starting with using the Wii remote as a lightsaber. Leung tells us, “We want to make the player feel like they are really holding a lightsaber in their hands—and the intuitive controls of the Wii Remote really allow for that.”

With the motion controls, it's easy to start slicing and dicing—and we mean that literally, at least as far as the environments are concerned. As Star Wars fans know, lightsabers can cut through pretty much anything, and you can use that to your advantage in Lightsaber Duels. No, you can't cut off any limbs, but you can chop up most objects in the battlefield, then use the Force to chuck those object chunks at your opponent. “Using the Force is an integral part of any lightsaber fights,” notes Leung. “While the lightsaber takes center stage, we have incorporated some Force powers in the game. For example, you'll be able cut down a pillar with your lightsaber and Force-throw it against your opponent. Of course, Count Dooku can execute Force lightning.”

“ARE YOU THREATENING ME, MASTER JEDI?”

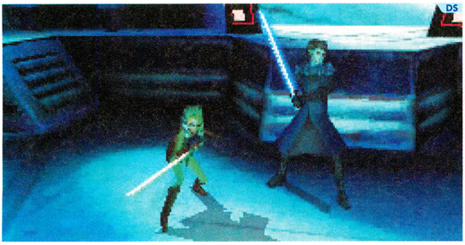
Including the dastardly Dooku, there are 10 playable fighters in the game; we can confirm Anakin Skywalker, Obi-Wan Kenobi, General Grievous, Asajj Ventress, Mace Windu, and newcomer Ahsoka Tano (see the sidebar “The Apprentice”), but LucasArts remains mum about the other three. “Each character in Lightsaber Duels plays differently and [they] have unique fighting styles and animations,” says Leung. “For example, Grievous plays like a tank, Ahsoka is very agile, Anakin's fighting style is very head-on and aggressive, and Obi-Wan is more level-headed and balanced.”

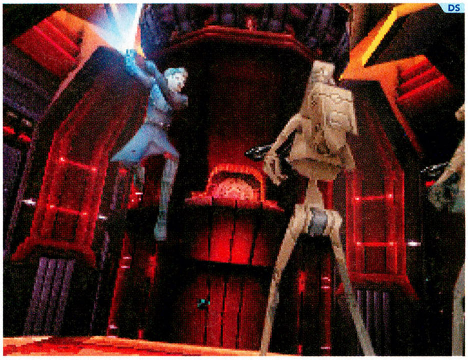
So there's some strategy involved—not just in selecting a character, but also in the combat. You'll perform the requisite combos, but there are also minigames that pop up when you and your opponent get in a “saber lock” (where your lightsabers are locked against each other). One is a rock-paper-scissors-esque game, where you can block, or use a lightsaber strike or the Force to gain the upper hand. (A lightsaber strike beats the Force, the Force beats a block, and blocking beats a lightsaber strike.) Another saber-lock minigame has you matching onscreen gestures, which is very similar to what you do in a similar situation in the duel



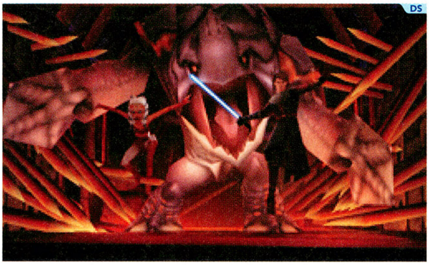
THE APPRENTICE

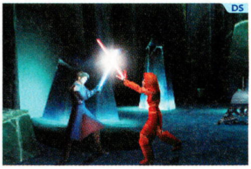
It turns out that Anakin Skywalker had his own apprentice during the Clone Wars: Ahsoka Tano. “She is a young girl, very bold, strong-willed, and a bit reckless—kind of like Anakin himself,” Leung tells us. “Their dynamic in the show is really fantastic, to see how Anakin handles her while going through his own struggles.” To be honest, we're a little concerned for her safety considering we never see her in *Revenge of the Sith*....





Unlike Lightsaber Duels (which follows the story of the TV show), Jedi Alliance has a completely original story that starts out with the Jedi investigating the theft of the crystals used to make lightsabers.





mode of the upcoming Wii title Star Wars: The Force Unleashed. That's not surprising given that the same developer, Krome Studios, is working on both games. "Basically, The Force Unleashed has offered us a head start in development," explains Leung. "The Force Unleashed is a great game that has a deep single-player experience and also includes a duel mode. We have taken what we have learned with the duel mode there and really have blown it out for Clone Wars."

Part of blowing it out is the inclusion of some very expansive levels, most of which are taken from the *Clone Wars* television show. When you're battling, you're constantly on the move; it's reminiscent of the Luke Skywalker-versus-Darth Vader duel in *The Empire Strikes Back*, where the battle started in the Carbonite-freezing room and moved on to the seemingly bottomless chasms of Cloud City. You'll flow from one area to the next as one player Force-pushes the other player (by gesturing with the nunchuk) through to a new area.

"WE'LL HANDLE THIS..."

Star Wars The Clone Wars: Jedi Alliance, the LucasArts-developed DS game (from their Singapore studio; see the "Studio Synergy" sidebar), takes a different tack: it's a third-person action-adventure game, but as the title hints, there's a bit more to it than that. "The idea behind the game is that two Jedi fight stronger than one," Leung explains. "They aren't like James Bond or Rambo where they just go behind the enemy line and take everybody out. Jedi usually work in teams, and especially in pairs. This game captures that essence of the Clone Wars. At the start of each mission you get to choose two Jedi from a choice of six. Depending on which pair you choose, you'll be able to pull off different combos [or find different] collectibles and areas." And as you might expect from the publisher of the co-op-heavy LEGO Star Wars, you can play Jedi Alliance with a friend via local wireless.

But the DS difference can really be seen in the gameplay. "All the movement, combat, and cinematic action sequences are controlled with just the stylus.... The experience is really that much more intuitive and immersive," proclaims Leung. "What's particularly innovative with Jedi Alliance is how we use the stylus to control lightsaber combat. With just taps, you can have direct and pinpoint-accurate control of the lightsaber. We have essentially turned your DS stylus into a lightsaber—albeit a wee-small one." Once engaged in combat, you simply tap an enemy's head to attack the head, or its legs to attack the legs. Outside of combat you can use the Force on context-sensitive objects by tapping on them (after holding either L or R to find out which objects you can interact with).

While the two games differ in their gameplay, the basic premise is the same: to re-create the experience of the movie and TV series. As Leung says, "We really want the player to feel like he's playing *The Clone Wars*—that it looks exactly like *The Clone Wars* and sounds exactly like *The Clone Wars*." So far, LucasArts seems to be succeeding. Look for Lightsaber Duels and Jedi Alliance this holiday season.

STUDIO SYNERGY

Both games offer a truly authentic Clone Wars experience, but Jedi Alliance was developed side by side with the television show. "We set up a new animation studio called Lucasfilm Animation back in 2002 in Singapore," explains Leung. "Much of the Clone Wars animation is done there. Also at that office, we created the LucasArts Singapore studio, and [Jedi Alliance] will be the first game coming out of there. The two teams in Singapore—Lucasfilm Animation and LucasArts—literally sit down the hall from each other. So it's not just the assets; they are exchanging ideas and talents. And I want to emphasize that the exchange, unlike [at] other studios, is not one-way. For example, the LucasArts team has created a new vehicle called the Devastation for the game. When we shared it with Dave Filoni, the supervising director on the series, he loved it so much that he's putting it in the show's second season. Also, because our production schedule is a little different, we may end up recording some music first that will end up in the show, and international voice talent may record lines for the game first before they work on the show."

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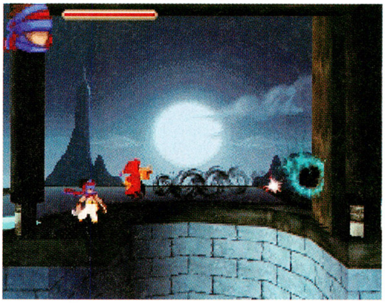
FRESH PRINCE

First look at **Prince of Persia: Fallen King**, a game that could only be done on DS.

Believe it or not, the Prince of Persia series has made only one prior appearance on the DS: 2005's Battles of Prince of Persia. Unlike every other Prince game since the series' inception in the late '80s, Battles tossed out the adventure and puzzle elements the series is famous for, and attempted to install a card-battle game in their place. While the game contained a number of good ideas, it didn't feel like a true Prince of Persia title.

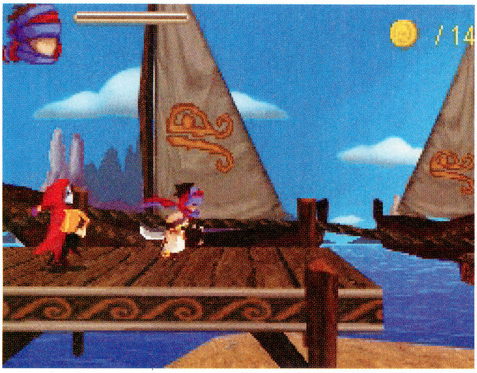


BY KAISER HWANG

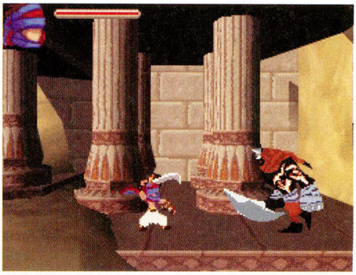
But in the upcoming Prince of Persia: The Fallen King, Ubisoft is bringing the series to the DS in true form—and in a way that can only be done on Nintendo's touch-screen wonder.

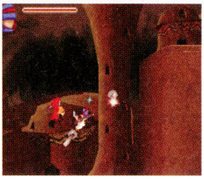
EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW

Immediately apparent from the screenshots of the game is that The Fallen King harks back to a pre-Sands of Time era, where gameplay consisted of moving in four directions: up, down, left, and right. Very much like the original 1989 game, players will navigate through a number of horizontal and vertical levels on a pure two-dimensional space, solving environmental puzzles,



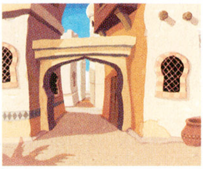
While the visual style is radically different than before, the overall structure is designed to feel like the classic Prince of Persia games.





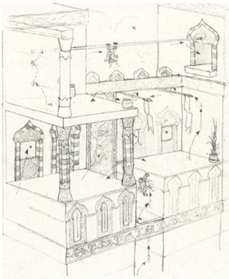
participating in sword battles, and leaping from platform to platform in an attempt to save Persia from a mysterious force known as the Corruption.

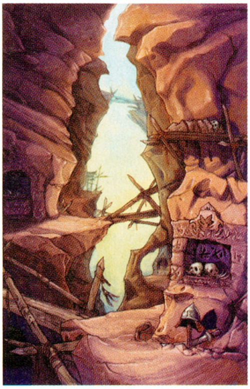
Why the return to classic gameplay? David Blanchard, producer of The Fallen King, had this to say: “The Prince of Persia games were always about a good balance of puzzles, acrobatics, and combat through the richness and the high quality of the Persian 1001 Nights environments. We are going in the same direction for Prince of Persia: The Fallen King for the Nintendo DS.” There are two core differences from the classic games, though.

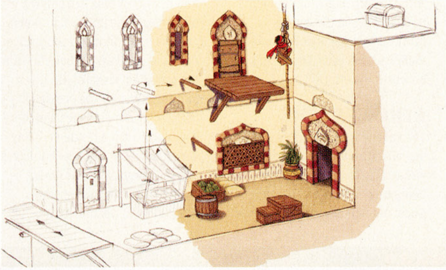


TOUCHY-TURVY

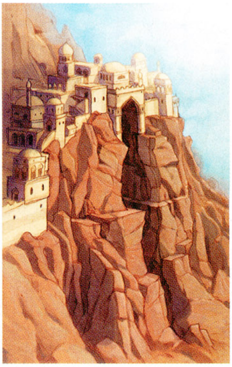
A key element of The Fallen King is that the game is played entirely using the stylus. As in The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass and Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword after it, controlling the protagonist is a simple affair, requiring nothing more than a clever combination of stylus drags and pokes. This control dynamic simplifies the player’s physical interaction with the game while opening it up to new and innovative concepts. “The Prince and companion’s controls, while moving and fighting, are entirely done with the stylus,” explains Blanchard. “It becomes easy to combine and alternate both the acrobatic and combat moves of the Prince, [as well as] the companion’s magical skills to fight and manipulate the environment. These new controls add many possibilities for the [game’s] development, and are challenging [the designers] to find new ideas,

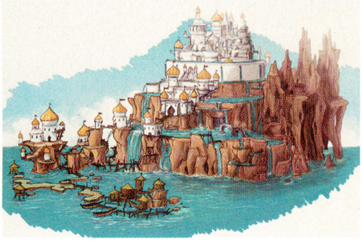


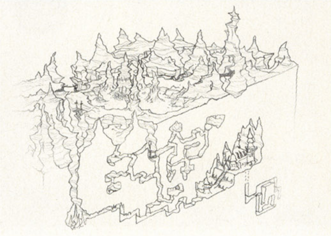


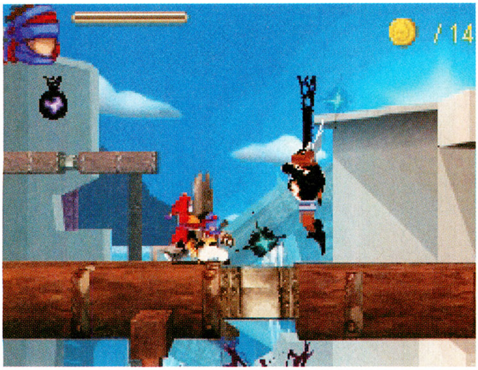


The levels are pretty large and can present some platforming challenges for the nimble Prince, especially when the Corruption impedes his path. Good thing he has a wizard to help him out.

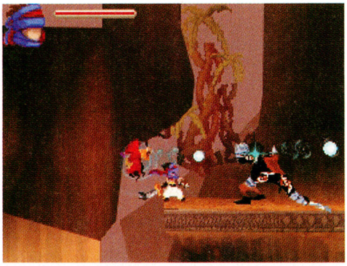


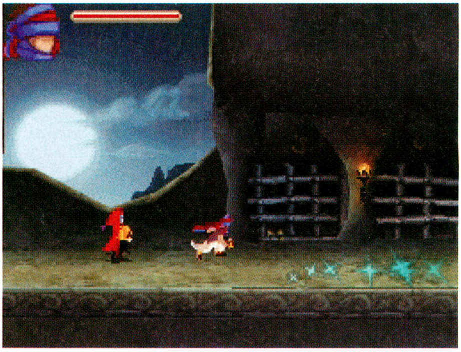






The Prince is no slouch with his sword, but the combat is made a bit easier by the Prince's new companion. The wizard's long-range attacks are especially helpful.





new challenges, and new puzzles to impress the player and keep them wanting more."

A FRIEND IN NEED

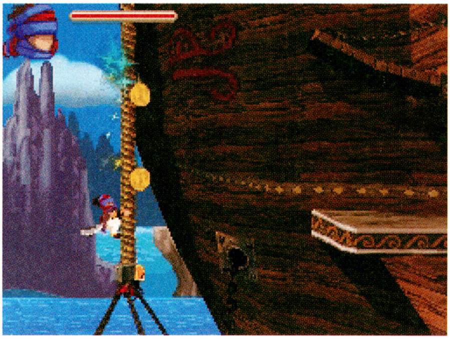
The other really significant twist on the Prince of Persia formula is the addition of a companion player. "The companion will meet and ally himself with the Prince at some point in the game," says Blanchard. "He is a partially corrupted wizard [that] follows the Prince through his actions, floating behind him." In the two levels we saw, the wizard was used for a variety of tasks, including ranged attacks, destroying corrupted barriers with magic, and solving a puzzle that involved dragging pieces of Corruption around the screen to activate door locks.

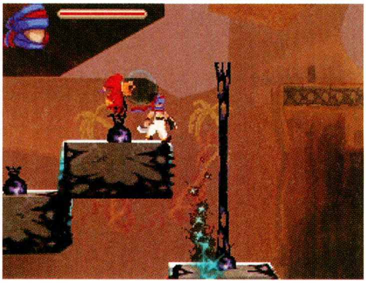
A constant companion character is a fairly large gamble for the series, but Blanchard considers this aspect to be one of the game's crowning achievements. "I'm very proud of how we are focusing our energy on developing the gameplay towards the association between the classic image and signature [action] of the [series], and the magic of the companion, which lets the player interact with the corrupted environment," he says. Even in the game's fairly early stage of development, Blanchard believes, "the result will be worth the effort."

A CHANGE OF FACE

The Fallen King introduces a new, seemingly anime-influenced, visual style (similar to the one being used in Prince of Persia: Ghost of the Past, coming to Xbox 360 and PS3). While some fans may miss the more hardened Prince of Wii's Rival Swords, we found the new look extremely effective on the DS's small screen. The character models for both the Prince and the wizard benefit from the simplified visual style—given that the stylus will be pressed to the screen at most times and that you play from a 2-D side-scrolling view it's critical that the characters and their animations be clear. Additionally, the characters are smaller in relation to their surroundings than they've been in previous games. That allows you to see just as much vertical space as horizontal space around them—and since the combination of vertical and horizontal movement is an integral part of the Prince of Persia games, that seems like a good thing to us. Blanchard says, "I believe the DS game will... definitely prove that we can make a great Prince of Persia experience on a unique handheld console." Frankly, David, we couldn't ask for anything more.

Almost everything in the game, from the platforming to the combat, is stylus-controlled, making Prince of Persia: The Fallen King a much more accessible adventure than its predecessors.





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LEFT **Guess what girls, he's single!**

RIGHT **Did you know decapitated heads don't float? Limbs do. Briefly.**

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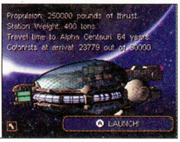
LEFT **Cleopatra hits the local mall.**

RIGHT **Revved-up time scale and console interface for quicker portable play.**



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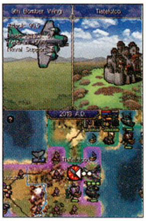

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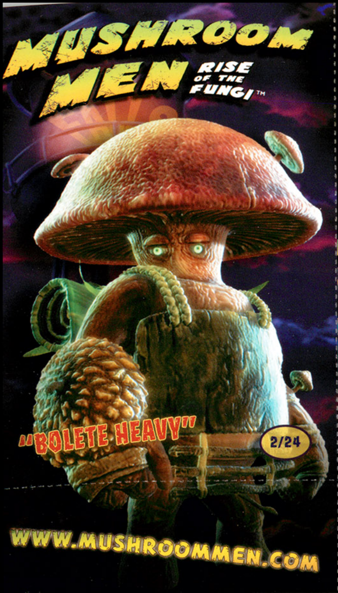
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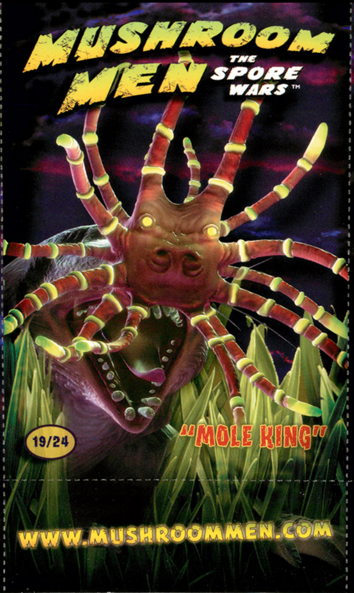
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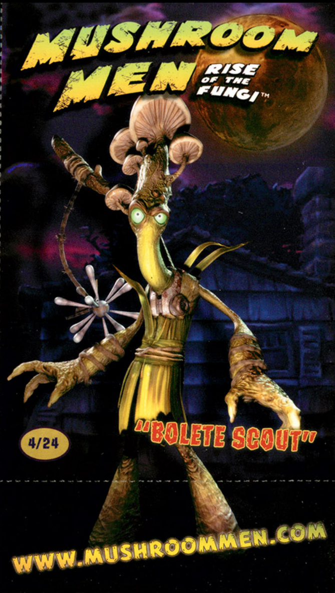
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NAME: BOLETE SCOUT

ORIGIN: THOUGH THE SLENDER FRAME MIGHT MAKE SOME THINK THEY ARE EASY FOES, THE AGILITY AND CAMOUFLAGE COLOR MAKE THE BOLETE SCOUT PERFECT FOR RECONNAISSANCE AND SURPRISE ATTACKS!

SPECIAL ABILITIES: RANGED WEAPON TACTICIAN

RESISTANCE: AERIAL ATTACKS

WEAKNESS: LOW STAMINA

FAVORITE FOOD: DEAD LEAVES

WS105

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MUSHROOM MEN RISE OF THE FUNGI™

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NAME: MOLE KING

ORIGIN: SITTING HIGH ATOP HIS MOUNTAIN KINGDOM, THE MOLE KING RULES WITH A MIGHTY CLAW AND CHALLENGES ANYTHING THAT INVADES HIS DOMINION

SPECIAL ABILITIES:
MIGHTY STONE TOSS

RESISTANCE:
GROUND ATTACKS

WEAKNESS: BLIND

FAVORITE FOOD: CARROTS

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MUSHROOM MEN THE SPORE WARS™

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NAME: BOLETE HEAVY

ORIGIN: WITHIN MINUTES OF SPROUTING, THE SHEER SIZE OF THIS MUSHROOM IS NOTICEABLE. BEING TRAINED FROM THE ONSET OF SENTIENCE, THE BOLETE HEAVY IS THE LAST BASTION FOR GROUND DEFENSE

SPECIAL ABILITIES:
MELEE EXPERT

RESISTANCE: BRUTE DAMAGE

WEAKNESS: SLOW & LUMBERING

FAVORITE FOOD: KITCHEN COMPOST

NM5Z1

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FOR A
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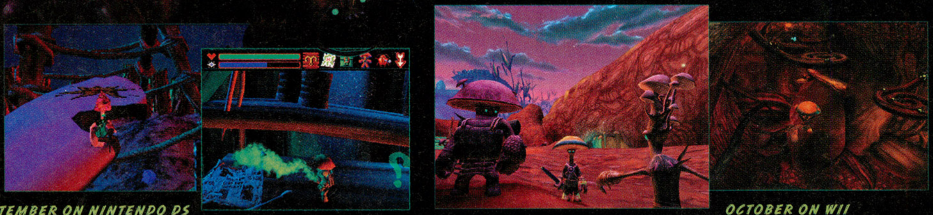

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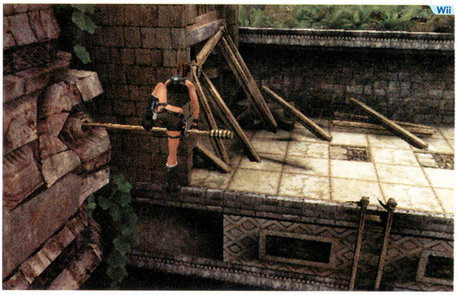
NOTES *from the* UNDERWORLD

This November Lara is going underground—literally—in Tomb Raider: Underworld for Wii and DS.

BY JUSTIN CHENG

After more than eleven years of raiding tombs, video gaming's first lady, Lara Croft, is still going strong. While she had some downs (2003's Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness), she's had many ups—particularly since developer Crystal Dynamics took over the reins of the series from original developer Core Design with 2006's Tomb Raider: Legend. Now Crystal Dynamics is working with developers Buzz Monkey Software and Santa Cruz Games to continue its success with Lara's upcoming adventure, Tomb Raider: Underworld for Wii and DS.



The game's title gives you a big clue as to what it's about. "Lara is entering into the underworlds of different ancient cultures around the globe," reveals Randy Houser, an associate producer at Crystal Dynamics. Lara's not on some sort of spiritual journey—she's venturing to physical sites and exploring ancient ruins to uncover places such as Xibalba, the Mayan underworld. This premise offers plenty of opportunities for the kind of exploration the franchise is famous for.

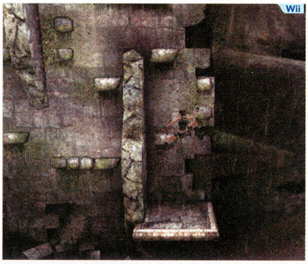
For Tomb Raider fans who are cautious about Tomb Raider on Wii after having played Tomb Raider: Anniversary, Buzz Monkey's Ted Brown, the lead level designer on the Wii version of Tomb Raider: Underworld, offers this: "Some people found parts of Tomb Raider: Anniversary frustrating. We read every review, every preview, and a lot of message boards, trying to identify exactly what those problems were, and how we could best address them." It wasn't all bad, of course: "People loved the first-person 'touch puzzles,' and wanted more, so we created a brand-new system to let us do just that."

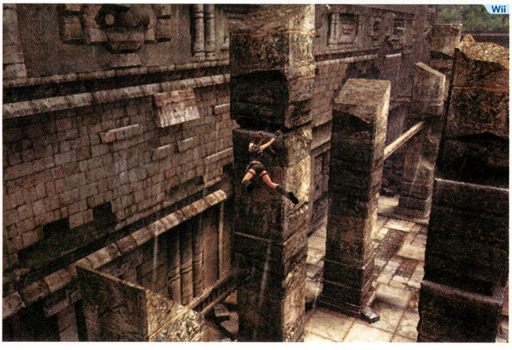
In addition to more "touch puzzles" (see the sidebar), Houser tells us the Wii version "delivers a truer sense of exploration and epic feel, which will give players a greater sense of choice and reward. The premise is to make a Wii game that incorporates those central themes but takes full advantage of the Wii technology and controllers to do things that the other versions can't. Particularly in the way that we can make the player feel that they are really making all the moves themselves and make them feel connected and immersed in the adventure." Brown adds, "We've custom-built new areas for the Wii, added more gameplay to key areas, and polished the combat and exploration controls to take full advantage of the Wii remote."

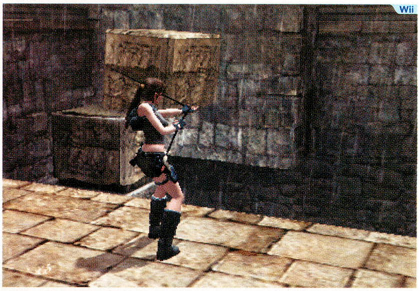
Explore Your World

Underworld expands upon the all-important concept of exploration by giving Lara new ways to traverse her surroundings. "Lara's gymnastic ability has been steadily evolving, and she moves through the world with more grace than ever before," says Brown. "A lot of climbing features have been added, her grapple rope can be used in new ways, and every level features new, epic puzzles that players have come to expect in a Tomb Raider game." Now Lara can make like Mario and wall-jump between two pillars to reach higher platforms, or she can climb walls that have hand- and footholds. And you won't have to worry about fussing with the game's camera while adventuring—the developers have reworked the camera so it's less of hindrance and gives you a better view of where you need to go.

That is not to say that the game holds your hand. In fact, there was a concerted effort to avoid the linearity of the previous games. Explains Houser, "There is more than one path when playing through the level. This was part of building a bigger sense of exploration; we wanted players to enter into these beautifully presented







Being able to use Lara's rope in new ways allows for different kinds of puzzle-solving opportunities.

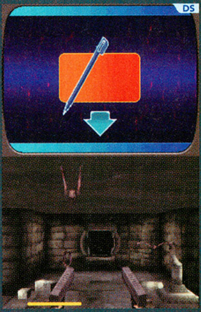
and pretty epic-looking areas and have to pause and think, 'Which way should I go?'" For instance, at one point you're presented with pillars you have to climb, but you can't quite jump high enough. There's a pole leaning against one, however, which you can jam into a crack on the side of one pillar, then grab the pole and swing on it to get on top of the taller pillar. If you examine the surroundings further, you might find another path that's not as direct but gets you to your goal all the same.

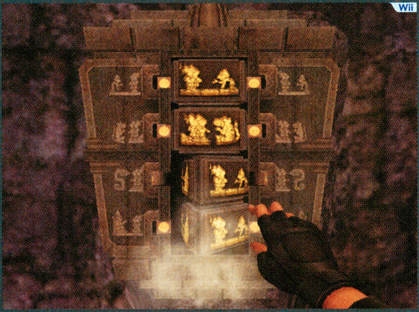
The environments are vast and rife with danger so it's a good thing Lara brought along her motorbike and her firearms. The bike allows her to race on trails from ruin to ruin. "We crafted genuinely fun terrain that the bike can take full advantage of," Brown says. "It's a natural fit, and, at this point, it's hard to imagine the game without it." On some of that terrain you'll come across dangers such as panthers or the gun-toting poachers chasing after them. You can let them fight each other, but they could turn their attention to you if they spot you. This is where your arsenal comes in: as in Anniversary, you can lock onto an enemy and point the remote at it for precise shooting.

SOLUTION AT HAND

Puzzle-solving is a key element of the Tomb Raider series, and as Tomb Raider: Anniversary proved, the Wii remote allows for unique ways to go about that. "We have filled the game with short, satisfying 'touch puzzles' that let you reach out and interact with the environment, using the Wii remote," Brown tells us. "You control Lara's hand as she manipulates puzzles, and leverage her 'multi-tool' when a high-tech solution is required.... This tool will be handled in first-person view and manipulated in real time by Lara's hand. She will have the ability to dust off, weld, burn, melt, pry, and extract debris, detritus, and the occasional precious artifact through this set of Wii interactions."

The DS version, too, makes use of the hardware's individual features. Says Hattner, "Many of the puzzles incorporate the touch screen and/or the microphone. Another cool feature is that as the player encounters puzzles in the game, they are collected in an Extras menu—accessible from the front end—which awards the player the opportunity to have a quick 'bite' of the game while waiting for the bus or at the doctor's office." The puzzles don't just involve moving blocks around, either; the developers have also included what they call "action puzzles," such as using the touch screen to shoot swarms of bats in the first-person perspective.



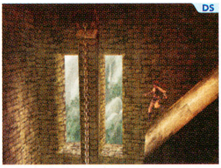


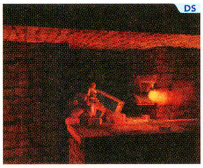
Raider to Go

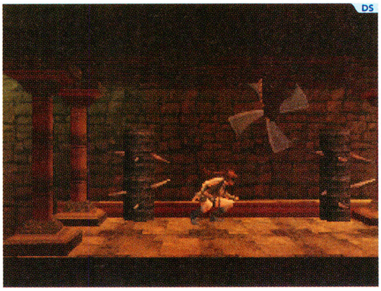
Naturally, Tomb Raider: Underworld on DS is slightly different, but it is built on many of the same ideas. Having two versions of a title built specifically for their respective platforms is a rarity when so many developers seem content to slap Wii or DS features onto existing games. And due to the platform customization, the developers don't consider either game a port. "The DS version of Tomb Raider: Underworld follows the same story and locales of the console versions, but adapts the gameplay to take advantage of the unique features of the DS system," says Crystal Dynamics associate producer Kari Hattner. "We're taking the best elements of the old-school 2-D platforming genre, while harnessing the power of the DS's 3-D graphics capabilities."

The mix of 3-D characters and backgrounds on a 2-D plane might make you think the game is pretty linear, but Hattner counters, "The DS version contains several multiroom puzzles that require multiple steps to solve, and the player may choose to tackle those steps in any order. The player may traverse an area three or four times, finding a new route to each piece of the puzzle."

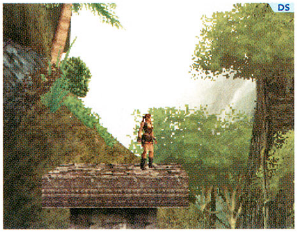
And like in the Wii version, many of Lara's signature moves are here, including her new wall-jump ability. "Most of Lara's abilities have made it into the DS version, allowing Lara to move through the levels with grace and ease," notes Hattner. "Maintaining fidelity to the Lara Croft experience with which users are familiar, whether that be from previous iterations in the series or from one of the other versions of Underworld, was an important factor in guiding the creation of Tomb Raider: Underworld for DS." The result is a game that captures much of what makes the Wii game so exciting—but in portable form.

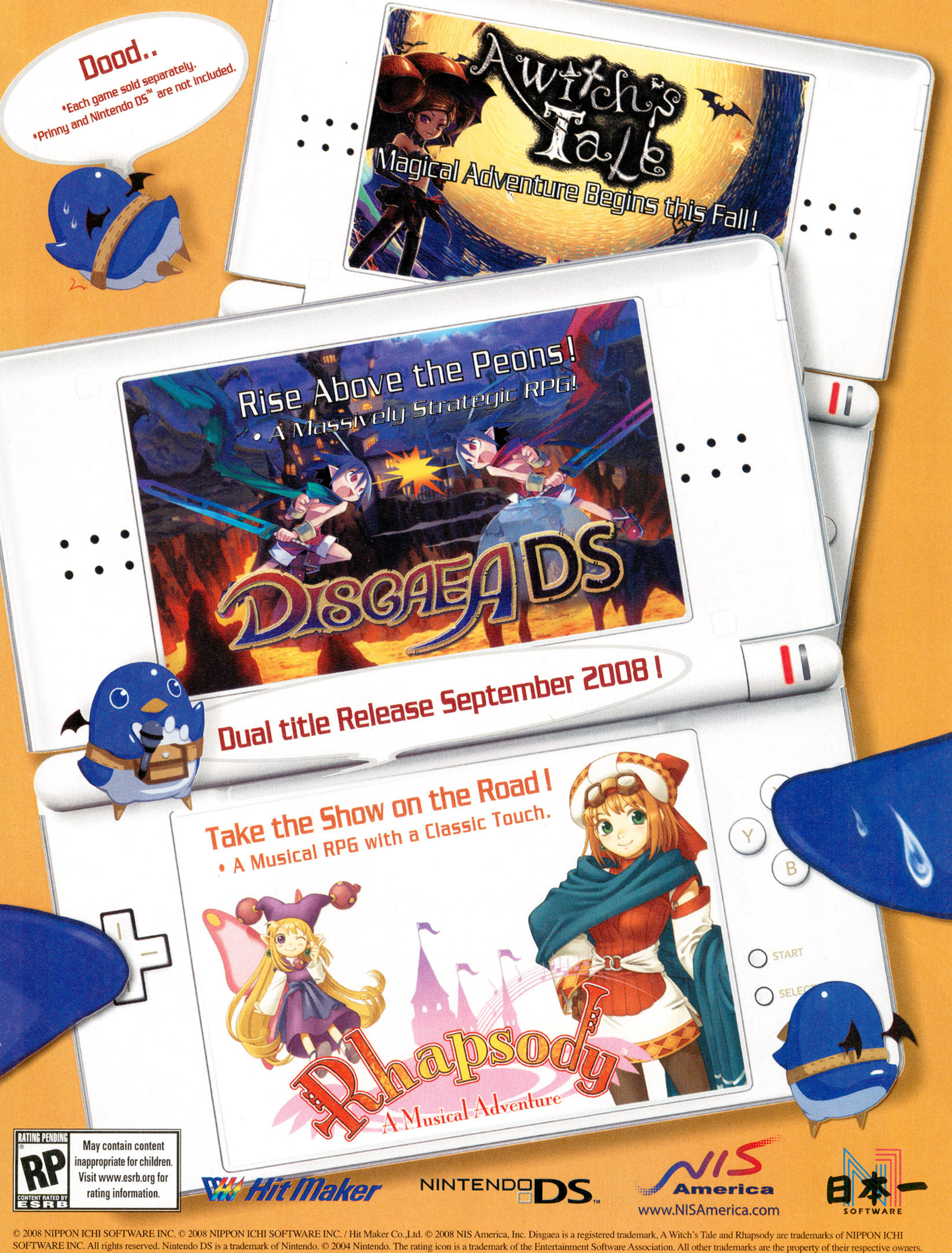






Tomb Raider: Underworld is one of the few DS games to support the Rumble Pak.




Dood..
*Each game sold separately.
*Prinny and Nintendo DS™ are not included.
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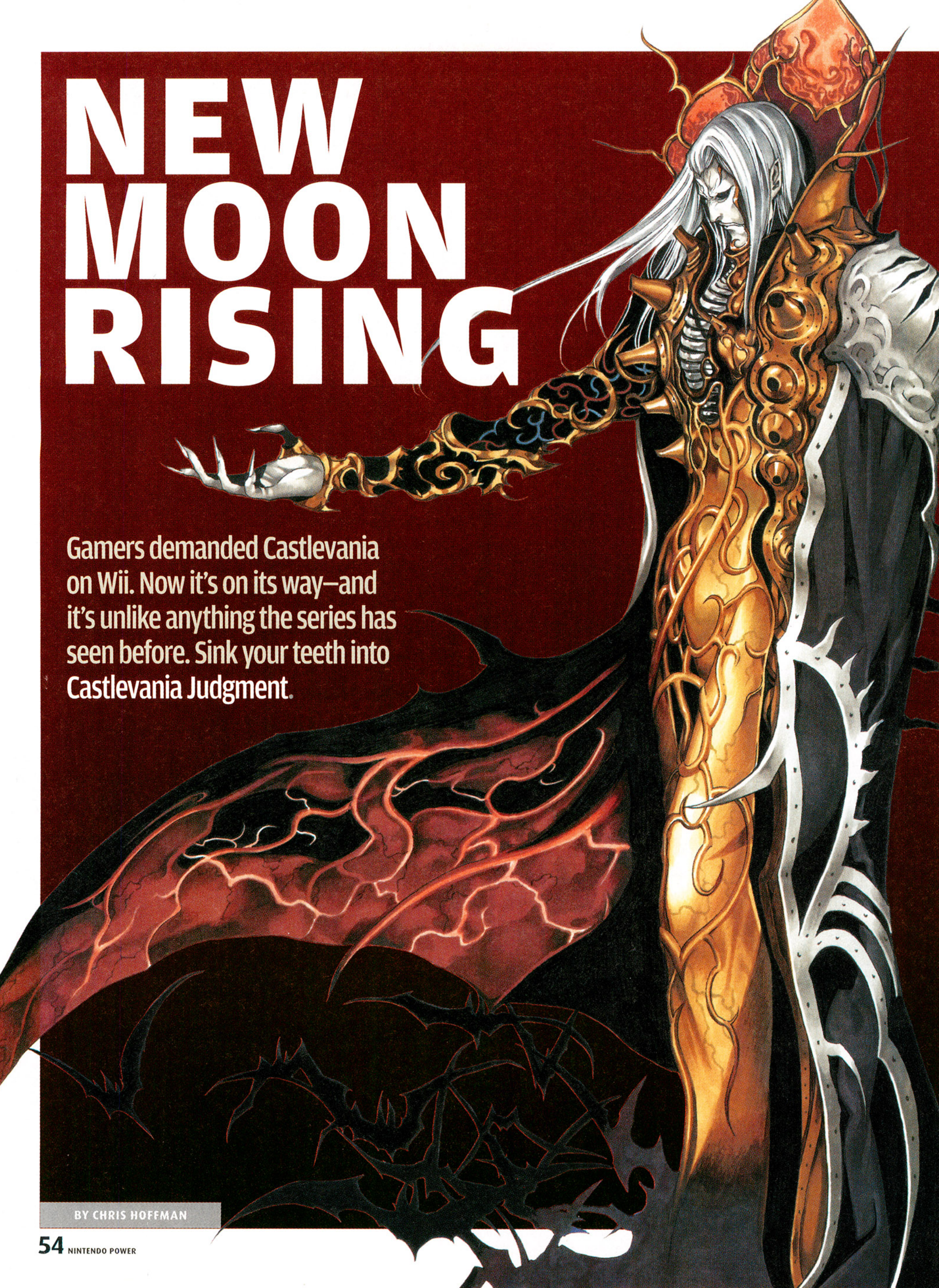
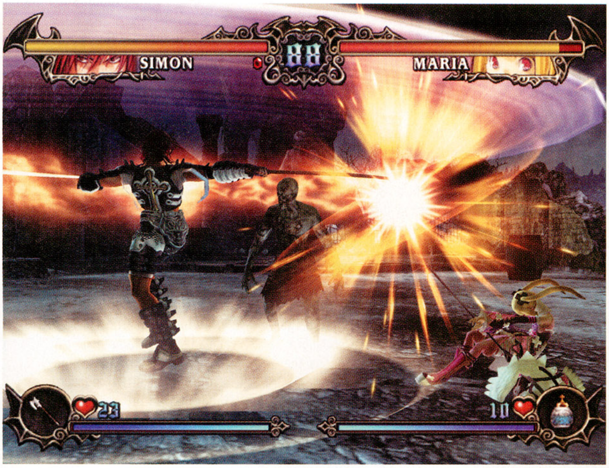
NEW MOON RISING

Gamers demanded Castlevania on Wii. Now it's on its way—and it's unlike anything the series has seen before. Sink your teeth into Castlevania Judgment.



BY CHRIS HOFFMAN



Throughout the 22-year history of Konami's Castlevania series, the franchise has been known for a lot of things: a unique Gothic horror motif, unparalleled action, an astounding sense of exploration, amazing music, and elaborate visual designs. But this fall, when the series makes its Wii debut with Castlevania Judgment, it will be known for something else: shattering all our expectations and reinventing itself as a fighting game. That's right—*a fighting game*. If you want traditional Castlevania action and adventure, you'll have to look elsewhere (specifically to the forthcoming Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia on DS), but if you want to see your favorite vampire hunters duking it out in motion-controlled one-on-one combat, Castlevania Judgment promises to deliver.

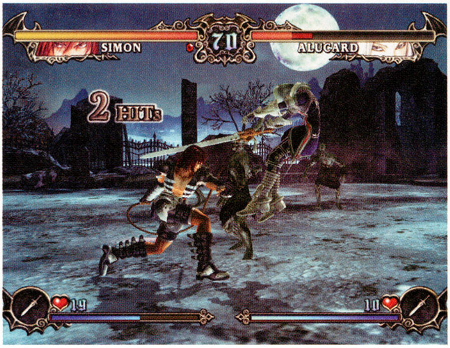
Although shifting to an untested genre might seem radical, for series producer Koji "Iga" Igarashi, it's the most sensible choice. "When considering the Wii version of Castlevania, I felt that using the Wii remote was a must for the game," he explains. "The dilemma I encountered here was that past Castlevania games have all been action games where the user can play for hours at a time, but having to shake the controller for hours would be very tiring. Therefore, the solution I thought would best fit for the franchise and also for the Wii platform would be a fighting-type game with action elements, utilizing the Wii remote."

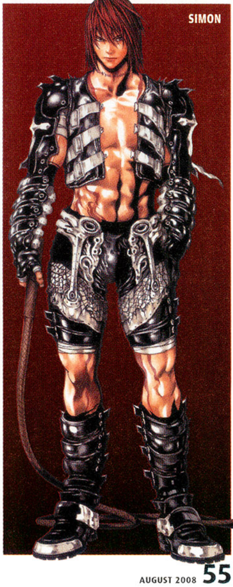
The result is a 3-D arena-style fighting game that remains true to the Castlevania atmosphere but offers completely fresh gameplay and makes the most of Wii's capabilities. As Iga indicated, all offense is mapped to the Wii remote. You'll execute standard attacks by swinging the remote as if it were a whip (or other weapon), and tapping B while swinging yields heavy attacks; holding B then swinging lets you utilize your special moves. The nunchuk is used for movement and defense: you guide your character with the Control Stick, block with the Z Button, jump with C, and dodge by shaking the nunchuk.

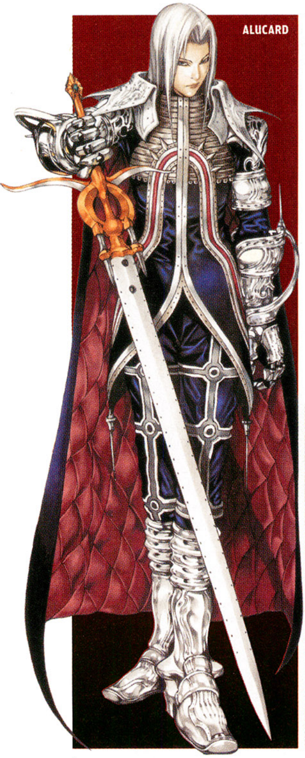
The controls are designed with intuitiveness and simplicity in mind. "In all honesty, I am not very good at playing fighting games,"

SIMON
58
ALUCARD
99 HITs

Who is the ultimate vampire hunter? Castlevania Judgment gives you the chance to find out.







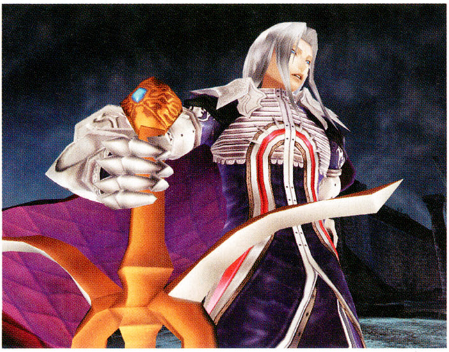
admits Iga. “Therefore this really inspired me to come up with a unique design for Castlevania Judgment. The design is very different from traditional fighting games. In traditional fighting games the timing of moves needs to be very precise for them to work correctly. For Castlevania Judgment, we are making the controls more simple and the moves more dynamic, which we believe will translate into loads of fun for the user.”

TOTALLY RE-VAMPED

While the combat is fast and fluid, what makes the game even more exciting is the opportunity to control heroes and villains from throughout Castlevania's lineage. The original vampire hunter, Simon Belmont, enters the fray with his trademark whip and a drill-like aerial move; young Maria uses her weapon—a funky staff with a birdcage on top—to glide as well as to inflict melee damage; Dracula's son Alucard battles with graceful sword combos; and the one and only Dracula crushes his foes with fireballs, bloodsucking bats, and teleportation powers. And that's just for starters—the cast will feature several more fighters, including Shanoa, the heroine from Order of Ecclesia, who you'll be able to unlock through DS-to-Wii connectivity.

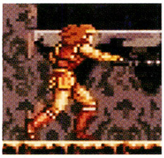
As you can tell from the artwork and screenshots on these pages, the characters, though familiar, have undergone complete visual overhauls. Manga artist Takeshi Obata (of *Death Note* fame) has thoroughly redesigned the cast with a sleeker, more dynamic appearance. Iga succinctly sums up his thoughts on Obata's characters' looks: “I am very satisfied with his very cool designs.”

In addition to distinct strengths and attacks, each character can acquire a variety of subweapons on the battlefield. Heroes such as Simon and Alucard can use traditional items like the boomerang and dagger, Maria can pick up various magic spells, and Dracula has access to the powers of darkness. (What, you expect him to go near holy water?) In true Castlevania fashion, a heart counter limits subweapon use (you can find more hearts on the battlefield, too), and in keeping with the game's philosophy of accessible controls, subweapons are used by pressing the A Button (or powered up for an item-crash attack by



CREATURES *of the* NIGHT

If you're not familiar with Castlevania's 20-plus-year legacy, here's what you need to know about the characters revealed thus far in Castlevania Judgment. Consider it Vampire Hunting 101.



Simon Belmont

FIRST APPEARANCE: CASTLEVANIA (NES)

Descended from a long line of vampire hunters, Simon Belmont is the original Castlevania hero, and his Vampire Killer whip is the most recognizable weapon in the series. He often fights in a leather skirt rather than pants; luckily for him, that's not the case in Judgment.

Alucard

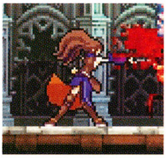
FIRST APPEARANCE: CASTLEVANIA III: DRACULA'S CURSE (NES)

The half-vampire son of Dracula fought alongside Trevor Belmont (Simon's ancestor) to defeat his own father, then returned centuries later to battle him once again. Alucard has mastered a variety of weapons. He sometimes goes by the names Adrian Farenheights Tepes and Genya Arikado.

Maria Renard

FIRST APPEARANCE: CASTLEVANIA: RONDO OF BLOOD (TURBOGRAFX CD—JAPAN ONLY)

Yes, Maria is a young girl, but she's a young girl with magical powers who kicks a lot of butt. Although captured by Dracula's forces, Maria became a playable character after being rescued by Richter Belmont. She also appeared as a young adult in later games, including Symphony of the Night.



Shanoa

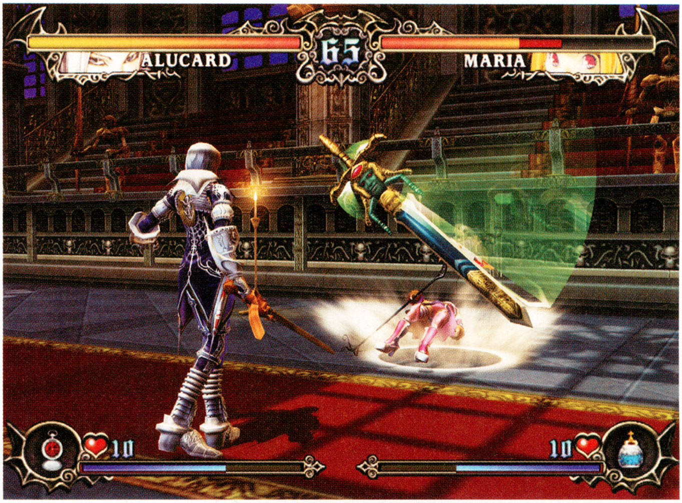
FIRST APPEARANCE: CASTLEVANIA: ORDER OF ECCLESIA (DS)

A member of the Order of Ecclesia, Shanoa can use the power of magical artifacts called Glyphs, which grant her a variety of weapons and abilities. Her main objective is to retrieve the supreme Glyph, Dominus, thus allowing her to defeat Dracula. She suffers from amnesia.

Dracula

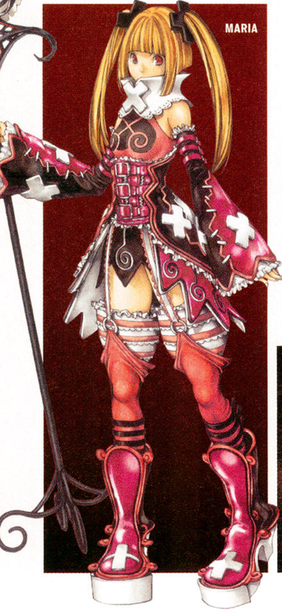
FIRST APPEARANCE: CASTLEVANIA (NES)

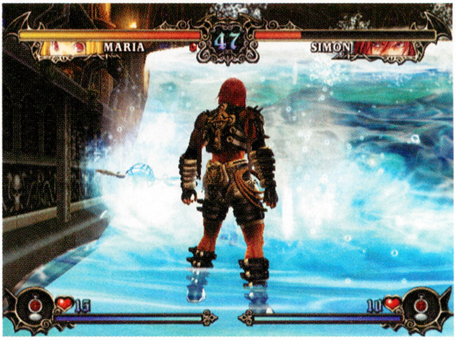
Despite being defeated by the Belmont clan regularly, Dracula uses his unholy might to rise from the dead again and again, continuously bringing tragedy to the people of Transylvania. He possesses many dark powers, and transforms into a giant demon from time to time.



holding A). No subweapon is required, however, to unleash the game's strongest attacks. If you build up your special-move gauge and press the Control Pad on the remote, you can take advantage of a devastating supermove—in Dracula's case, a huge explosive orb summoned via arcane symbols—to decimate your foe.

As for how all these characters from throughout the ages wound up fighting each other, Iga remains quiet about the story details, but urges players to not worry about it. "When making this concept we wanted to develop a game that was very lively and had lots of things going on at once, almost like a festival," he states. "To create such a game we decided to ignore the timeline of the [series], which is normally very difficult in most cases. However, the end result will allow players to see very interesting matches in the game, since many of the characters have been pulled from different Castlevania titles."


MARIA



LEST YE BE JUDGED

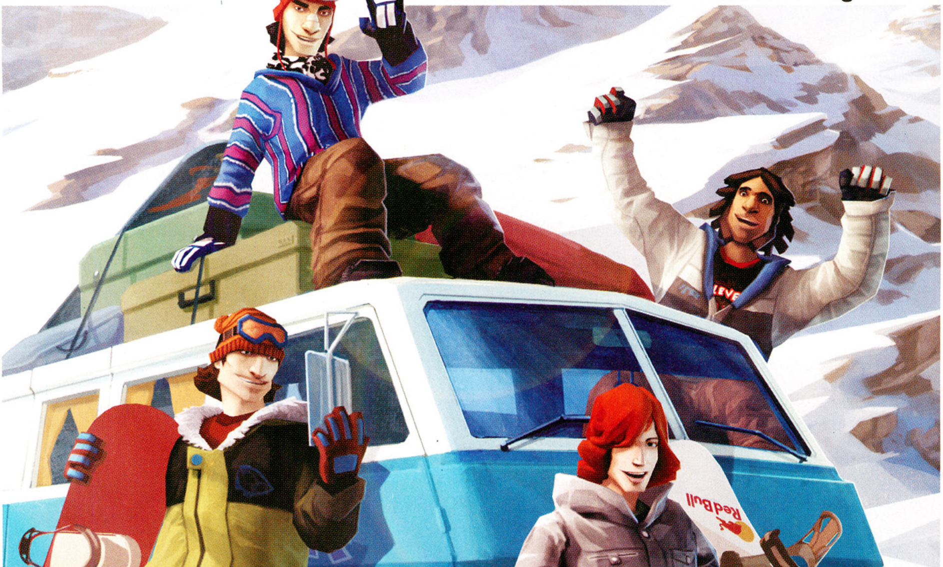
Though pounding your opponent into oblivion is your primary concern during battle, you'll also want to pay attention to your surroundings. Inspired by past Castlevania games (and featuring remixes of classic Castlevania tunes), the wide-open stages—which include an ornate gold-trimmed hall, a cavernous underground waterway, and creepy moonlit ruins—feature numerous interactive elements to aid or hinder you in combat. You can destroy parts of the environment to reveal weapons or power-ups, you can throw objects at your opponent, and you can set deadly traps. You'll also have to deal with enemy monsters—zombies, for instance—that interfere with the battle.

Some aspects of the game are still shrouded in mystery. Iga hasn't fully disclosed what modes will be on offer, but he promises that "there will be a lot of dialogue between the characters from different eras in the Castlevania timeline, which we hope will be entertaining for the fans." He also confirms that you'll be able to compete head-to-head over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, and hints that there may be offline bonus modes for more than two players. Additional features will be revealed in the coming months.

Castlevania Judgment may be a far cry from what series fans are used to, but there's no doubt that it's the most innovative Castlevania in years—an exciting and ambitious project that aims to breathe new life into a familiar world. "It is definitely different from previous versions of the franchise," says Iga. "I guess some fans may worry about the game quality, but I am confident that we can achieve a very high-quality game. I think that fans...will see that it stays true to the Castlevania series. Even though this is a fighting game I can guarantee that it will be fun." Given the recent track record of Castlevania games on Nintendo systems, we have no reason to doubt it.

KING OF THE HILL

The man they call "The Flying Tomato" looks to bring extreme sports home like never before in **Shaun White Snowboarding** for Wii.



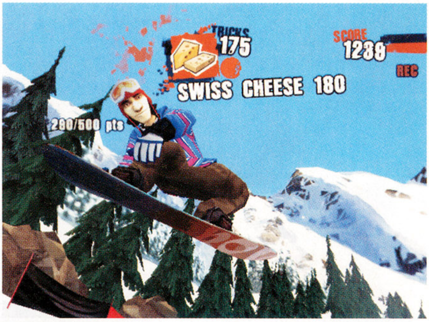
BY CHRIS SHEPPERD

While most of us are concentrating on getting swimsuit-ready at this time of year, a development team at Ubisoft's Montreal office is focused on snow: they're deep into production of Shaun White Snowboarding. The game is Ubisoft's first entry in the extreme-sports genre, and the snowboarding superstar's video game debut. It's also one of the first games to utilize the Wii Balance Board. We went feet-on at Ubisoft to get the details.

CULTURAL AWARENESS

There's no mistaking Shaun White's influence on the snowboarding world. At 21 years old and after earning gold medals at both the Olympics and the X Games, he's already the most well-known boarder to ever hit the slopes. He also represents much of what the snowboarding culture is all about—having fun, challenging yourself, and maintaining friendships, even during competitions. That's why Ubisoft has been working with White for over two years—since before his big Olympic performance—to capture the essence of board culture. And White has been eager to contribute; his attitude, humor, and charisma are all over the game. It doesn't hurt that he is a gamer—he uses downtime between events and appearances to catch up on the latest titles with his friends. He also helped choose the music for the game; he's a big fan of classic rock, but his selections for the soundtrack cover a lot of musical territory.

Despite the athletic and competitive nature of snowboarding, there's a strong community vibe that runs through the culture, and it gets plenty of attention in Ubisoft's game. In fact, the whole single-player mode is an around-the-world romp with your buddies, and the better you do at each location, the more people join your entourage. Your pals play an integral role in how you perform: before starting a challenge, you select which friend will hold the camera that follows you down the hill. Each friend endows you with a set of skills and special tricks, so who you choose as your cameraman is an integral part of your success. Your pal will also give you advice as you cruise down the hill, encouraging you to try bigger tricks and find new lines. As you complete challenges in these locations and more, you'll earn respect points that will open new events and attract the attention of new friends. Shaun himself will even join your entourage as a camera-toting buddy—but not until you've thrown down enough big performances to grab his attention.

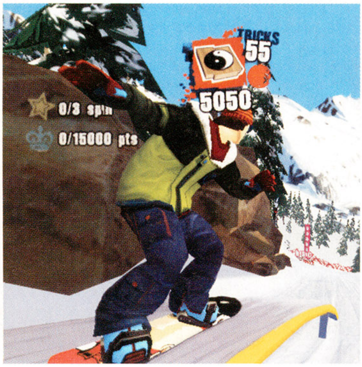


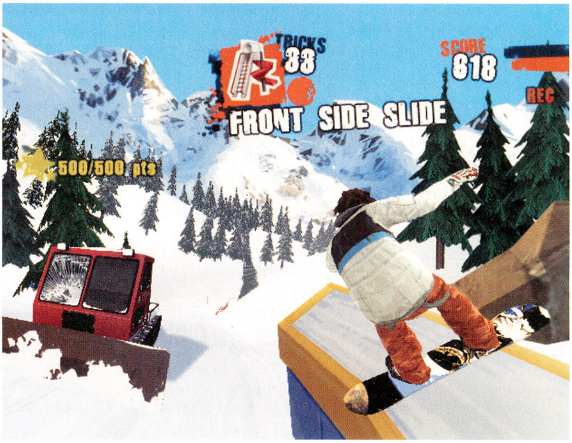
GOING GLOBAL

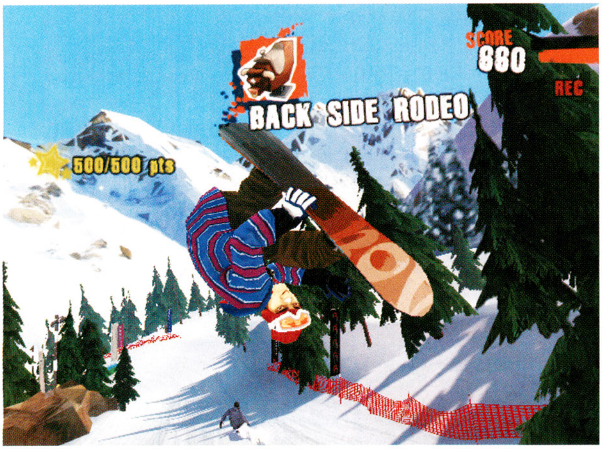
One of the big attractions to snowboarding is that you can approach it in various ways—racing, performing tricks, or just cruising down a remote mountain. The single-player game will let you experience all of these aspects in locales around the world. For example, when you head to the snowy peaks of Chile, you'll encounter rugged terrain and extreme weather. In Japan you'll show off in a crazy indoor snowpark designed for big air. And you can let your creativity shine in an area called the Backyard Lots on man-made obstacles such as staircases and handrails. Of course, there are half-pipes, too, where you can run up monster scores by putting together solid runs. The point isn't always to get to the next hill—it's about challenging yourself to go bigger and find new paths, as well as to build a team of good friends.

Though details are scarce at press time, Ubisoft tells us that the culture of hanging out with your snowboarding comrades will extend to the real world. You'll be able to share the slopes with your real friends, but detail such as what events will be available and how cooperative events will work are still being ironed out. However, Ubisoft promises a racing mode

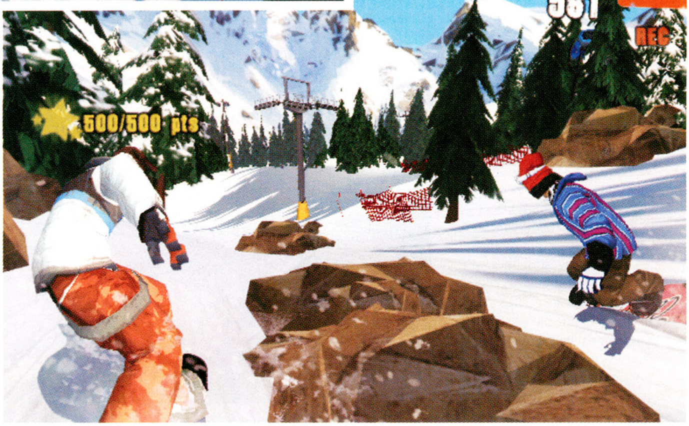
Plenty of rails, boxes, and natural terrain provide opportunities to catch big air, but you'll have to rely on your feet to stick the landing.







Impress your friends with high-flying maneuvers using a combination of the Balance Board and the Wii remote.



for live head-to-head action. Given that Wii supports only one Balance Board in use at a time, one of the competitors will need to use a Wii remote (more on the Wii-remote controls later). Perhaps to help soften that blow, the developers have included a ghost time trial in which multiple players can take turns strutting their stuff. We didn't get to see the ghost mode in action, but if it's anything like the ghost mode in 1080° Snowboarding, we'll be ecstatic.

BEST FEET FORWARD

The marriage between snowboarding and the Wii Balance Board seems like a no-brainer, which is why Ubisoft jumped at the opportunity to combine the two. The Wii version of Shaun White Snowboarding was built around the Balance Board from the very beginning—the project wasn't retrofitted for its use. As you would expect, you turn the board perpendicular to the television just like you're standing on a snowboard. (You'll be able to set whether you're more comfortable with your left or your right foot forward.) With your feet firmly on the board, you simply rock onto your heels or your toes to carve up the snow. Gravity will always be pushing you forward a little, but you can add speed by leaning toward your TV and slow down by leaning away. The jumping motion is a lot like actual snowboarding—you press your weight down onto the board with a quick pop. You don't actually jump, which is a good thing—you won't trip and fall in your living room and your balance stays where it should be on the board at all times. Once you're in the air, you perform tricks by leaning or by doing hula-hoop motions, moves that would be pretty hard to do if your feet weren't touching the board. You use the A and B Buttons on the remote as modifiers for the types of tricks you're doing (such as switching from a simple spin to a grab move), but for the most part it's your work on the Balance Board that determines your path down the mountain.

Getting comfortable on the Balance Board is a multistage process. The first time you step on the board, you have the urge to keep your feet planted and your legs locked, which results in you moving only your upper body and not actually shifting your weight on your feet. Once you get your hips and legs involved, you'll start making good enough turns to avoid trees and obstacles. But your next inclination is to shift your weight to the extremes, making for a rather harsh run. When you finally relax and begin to move naturally, you'll be gliding down the hill like a pro.

Shaun White Snowboarding won't be packaged with a Balance Board, but if you don't have the peripheral you can still carve up the mountain by holding the Wii remote flat in your hand and maneuvering it as if it were a snowboard. Although the game was designed specifically for the Balance Board, special attention has been devoted to making the Wii remote controls feel consistent with the board's, and to ensuring that the two control styles will be equally challenging. Look for Shaun White Snowboarding to hit store shelves in November, right around when you'll be digging your board out of the basement for another killer winter on the slopes.

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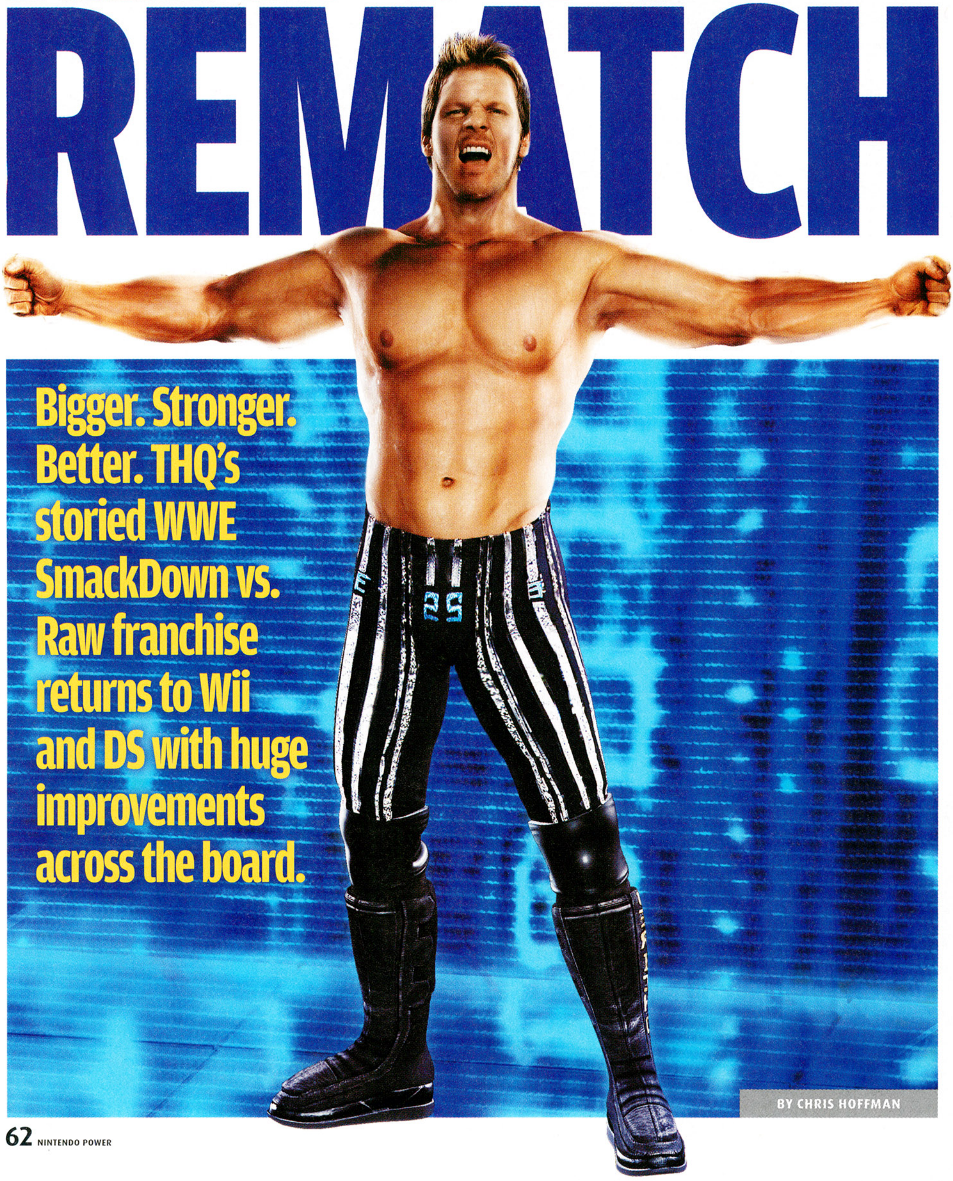
READY FOR A REMATCH



Bigger. Stronger. Better. THQ's storied WWE SmackDown vs. Raw franchise returns to Wii and DS with huge improvements across the board.

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

Last year the long-running WWE SmackDown vs. Raw series broke out of its typical routine and landed on Nintendo systems for the first time. Both the Wii and DS versions of the annual wrestling extravaganza played on their platforms' respective strengths—the Wii game provided fast-paced arcade-style motion-based action while the DS edition centered on unique touch-controlled fun—but neither title quite managed to achieve main-event status. This year THQ is looking to remedy that situation. WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009 is on the way, and our early hands-on time indicates that the games will improve upon their predecessors in every conceivable way.

THE Wii GAME

The focus of the Wii version is on keeping what worked in last year's game and building upon it to create a significantly deeper and more immersive experience. The simple, accessible controls remain firmly in place: you still move your character with the nunchuk's Control Stick, swing the remote to execute various strikes, swing the remote while holding A to activate basic grapple moves, and swing it while holding B to trigger interactive grapples (which you complete by gesturing to pull off a variety of throws and slams). The popular user-controlled taunts (accomplished by holding down the C button, then using the remote and nunchuk to mimic your superstar's taunt of choice) are back as well, but now the developers at Yuke's are taking things one step further by adding similar control over the superstars' entrances and victory celebrations.

"We wanted to push interactivity even farther than just the match," says senior creative manager Cory Ledesma. "It's also during the entrance, so that the fans can act out all the superstars' motions.... Then we also have interactive victory scenes where we give the user control of how he wants to end the match. It's...the whole interactivity package, where you're able to control everything from start to finish."

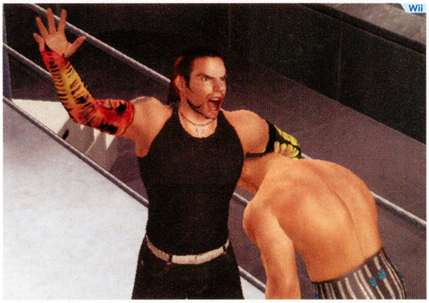
During your wrestler's entrance, multiple onscreen prompts show you the available options for your actions. You might raise both the remote and nunchuk to throw your arms up and play to the crowd, or you might gesture to the side to slap hands with audience members. Conversely, you can play the heel and bat the crowd away. You'll even be able to control signature superstar actions, such as climbing the turnbuckle and beating your chest as Chris Jericho (by shaking the remote and nunchuk back and forth), reaching up and removing your hat as the Undertaker (by moving the remote up then down), or reaching up to catch the mic as Ken Kennedy (by thrusting the remote up) then yelling "Kennedy" (by pressing a button).

The options after a victory will be just as plentiful. You'll be able to pose in the ring, celebrate on the turnbuckle, make the ref raise your hand, or interact with your opponent in a number of ways, including shaking his hand, administering a brutal chair beatdown, or kicking an object into his face with a Van Terminator.

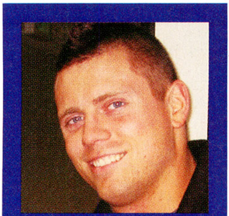
"Some of our inspiration for this [is that] we had it in a past SmackDown game [WWE SmackDown: Here Comes the Pain for PS2]," explains Ledesma. "You just had a choice if you wanted to shake hands or whatever. And people absolutely loved that. I still get people asking me about that. And so we wanted to take it a step further, where you're interacting—you're doing the motion, not just selecting something and watching it happen."

Control improvements extend beyond added motions. The A Button is used to pick up objects and raise your opponent off the mat (last year's game required a nunchuk gesture), and the B button activates improved defensive maneuvers. By holding B you can block incoming blows, or by tapping B at the right time you can counter your opponent's strikes and grapples (similar to previous SmackDown games).

Perhaps more important than the controls, however, is the addition of new modes and features. "The big push we're making with Wii is that we're bulking up the feature set so it's comparable to what you'd find on the other



Unlike last year's game, SVR 2009 features a momentum meter for executing signature moves such as the Twist of Fate [above].



MIZZED OPPORTUNITY

When THQ stopped by the Nintendo Power offices to show off WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009, they brought along none other than The Miz, one half of the WWE tag-team champions. We asked ECW's self-proclaimed chick magnet to advise some Nintendo characters about how to improve their luck with the ladies.

LUIGI

You are just way too nice. You let Mario get all the attention. Girls want the lead singer, not the backup singer. Add some flair to your outfits...something to make you stand out: jewelry, piercings, color your hair, or wear something that Mario wouldn't. Be the pimp that you are!

PIT

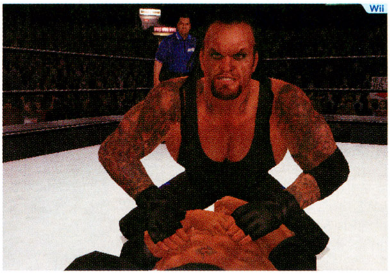
I have to admit you kind of look like a chick. Granted, women like a little femininity, but they want a man. You seem to have all the qualities of a hardcore guy, but you have to use them. Don't look like a chick; look like a chick magnet like your man The Miz.

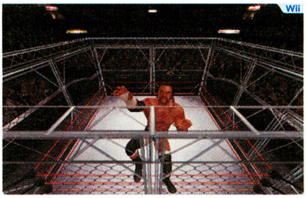
CAPTAIN FALCON

Captain, I think the first way for you to become a true ladies' man is to not drive in a way that causes people to get dizzy and throw up. Chicks hate guys that hurl. And just a nice car isn't going to cut it with the ladies. It helps, but you need the right line to score.

GANONDORF

First off, G-Money, never turn into a boar on a date. Snorting might turn off a girl. You have a very mysterious look...women love that, but there's a fine line between mysterious and creepy. Don't be too forward or forceful, or you could scare them away.

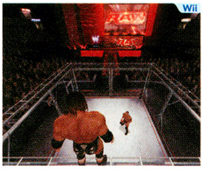




New match types take full advantage of Wii's motion-based controls. You'll raise the remote and nunchuk to escape the steel cage.

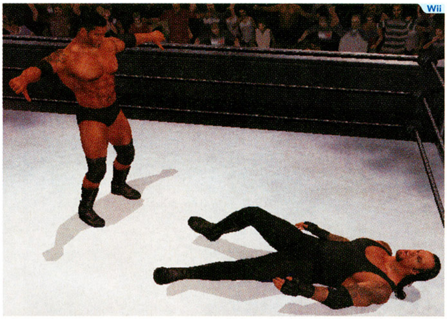
console versions," Ledesma states. "Full season mode, create an entrance—all the big modes that were missing last year in our first attempt are in this year. And then we have a lot of new match types."

Whereas last year's game had only five match types, WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009 has 40, such as Fatal 4-Ways, Hell in a Cell, ladder matches, table matches, TLC (tables, ladders, and chairs) matches, handicap matches, steel-cage matches, backstage brawls, and ECW extreme matches. As you'd expect, the new match types pull you into the action with special motion controls. In a ladder match, for example, after you set up and climb the ladder in the center of the ring, you must lift the remote and nunchuk to reach for the championship belt. When onscreen prompts appear, you must swing downward with both hands to unclasp the belt, eventually retrieving it and claiming victory.

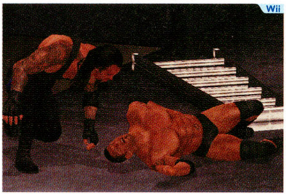


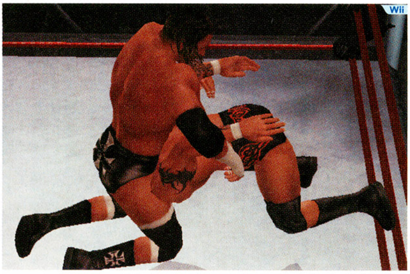
Steel-cage matches offer similar thrills. After you knock an adversary against the side of the cage, you can initiate an interactive grapple then drive your foe's head into the cage by raising and lowering the remote, or rake his face across the mesh by shaking the nunchuk. When you're ready to climb out of the cage, you must raise and lower the remote and nunchuk in sync with onscreen indicators, and if your opponent's trying to escape, you can knock him off the cage by shaking the remote, or yank him down by holding A or B and swinging the remote. Alternatively, you can punch open the cage door and attempt to walk out, but doing so may let your opponent slam your head in the cage door (accomplished by thrusting the remote to the side).

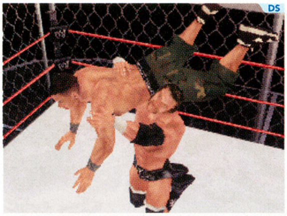
Add to that an all-new Road to WrestleMania story mode (which features six distinct storylines, including a co-op tag-team mode), online play, and an updated roster featuring 60 superstars—THQ recently confirmed that Triple H, Batista, Rey Mysterio, and The Miz will be joining previously announced characters John Cena, Randy Orton, Matt and Jeff Hardy, the Undertaker, Chris Jericho, and Ken Kennedy—and you have an extremely promising wrestling game.



[Above] With a full momentum meter and a press of the C Button, you can show off with your character's special taunt.







You asked for it, you got it. The DS game features more match types and a lot more control over your superstar.

THE DS GAME

If the Wii version of SmackDown vs. Raw 2009 is an evolution of last year's game, the DS version could be considered a revolution. This year's edition boasts a new developer (TOSE), a bigger roster, a create-a-superstar mode, and—most significantly—a more-traditional fighting system in lieu of the situation-based gameplay from the previous release.

"Obviously, if you'll recall last year's [game], it's a completely different experience," notes associate creative manager Dan Ryan. "We wanted to use the touch screen last year, but we kind of got a little too experimental, so to speak. A lot of the fans expected more-traditional gameplay so we wanted to give that to them."

While you move your character around the ring with the Control Pad, the offense is controlled primarily via the touch screen. You tap your opponent while holding different directions on the Control Pad to throw various strikes, and you lock up with your opponent by drawing circles on the touch screen. A single circle executes a light grapple, and a quick double circle initiates a strong grapple; after locking up, you can follow through with holds and slams by pressing up, down, or to the side on the Control Pad, or you can draw a line on the touch screen to send your opponent running with an Irish whip.

Similar actions work when your opponent is on the ground—draw a circle to initiate a ground grapple, or hold down while doing so to pin your opponent. Another unique touch-screen interaction comes into play when you're using a submission hold. To escape the hold, you must tap an icon of the targeted body part that appears on the touch screen; if you're on offense, you can drag the icon around, making it harder for your opponent to break free.

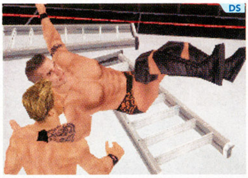
In addition to revamped gameplay, the DS version of the game features several new match types, including last-man-standing matches, ladder matches, steel cage matches, table matches, and TLC matches.

"Each [match type] will more or less revolve around a different kind of minigame that uses the stylus and the touch screen that's unique to that match and kind of matches the action," describes Ryan. "Like the steel cage—you're gonna pop his hands with the stylus and alternate and your guy's going to climb out. And [when] the other guy [is climbing out], you're going to whip the stylus back and forth to shake the cage and shake him off. We're trying to use [the touch screen] in unique ways that have never been done before, especially in a wrestling game."

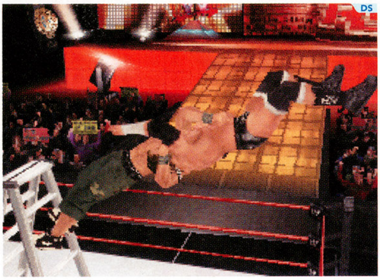
Another highlight should be the game's RPG-inspired Season mode. "Basically, it's an opportunity for you to capture all the belts and to jump to all the different brands [Raw, SmackDown, and ECW]," notes Ledesma. "And it's kind of a semi-free-roaming environment where you get to interact with a lot of characters backstage. You get to decide who you want to fight."

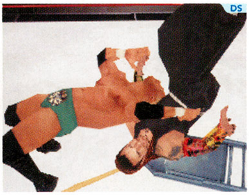
Not only will you get to walk around backstage at the arena, but you'll also hang out at your wrestler's living quarters, hit the gym (which plays host to three endurance-boosting minigames, including one that uses the DS's microphone), and visit WWE headquarters, where you'll progress storylines by talking with your brand's general manager or WWE owner Vince McMahon. You'll even get to buy new gear, such as wrist tape, gloves, and elbow pads, to increase stats in five categories: power, submission, durability, speed, and momentum.

At present, both the DS and Wii versions of WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009 are only 60 percent complete, but even in their unfinished states they're notably superior to last year's releases. There's no doubt that they have impressive potential—we'll see if THQ can translate that into a championship reign when the games hit store shelves this fall.



The DS version of the game uses the same motion-capture data as the home-console version, allowing for amazing animation.





The Blue Blur resumes his solo career and rediscovers his 2-D roots in Sonic Unleashed for Wii.

BACK ON THE FAST TRACK

BY STEVE THOMASON

Invariably, when a long-running franchise transitions from 2-D to 3-D, there are a few bumps in the road. Some may argue the path has been rockier for Sonic the Hedgehog than for most, but developer SonicTeam will try to get the series back on track by bringing 2-D and 3-D together in Sonic Unleashed. As Sega's fleet-footed mascot races through each level, the camera switches back and forth seamlessly between the two perspectives, and what we've seen thus far looks incredibly promising. The side-scrolling sections naturally hark back to the hedgehog's beloved Genesis days, and the 3-D bits are on rails à la Sonic and the Secret Rings—only better because the developers have made a concerted effort to keep the action moving fast and furious.

Much has already been shown of the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 versions of Sonic Unleashed, but what you see here are the first *real* screens of the Wii game. We also sat down with first-time producer and series vet Yoshihisa Hashimoto to learn more about Sonic's exciting return to form.

NINTENDO POWER With this being the first Sonic game for which you've served as team leader, what was your biggest goal going into the project?

YOSHIHISA HASHIMOTO We had two goals with Sonic Unleashed. First, to entertain customers with Sonic's trademark speed and with a more-refined gameplay experience in both 2-D and 3-D, and second, to have Sonic himself perform new actions, which we have always done for previous Sonic titles.

We understand that a separate team is working on the Wii game. How closely are they working with the PS3/Xbox 360 team? What percent of the content would you say is original to the Wii version?

Although the Wii version is being made by a separate team altogether, that team has always kept in step and cooperated with the PS3/Xbox 360 team, sharing the same development direction and resources. Beyond that, however, it has tried to include a fresh sense of playing via Wii's unique interface. Therefore, the stage designs are 100% original to the Wii version of Sonic Unleashed even though it shares the same motifs with the other versions. In particular, the teams that worked on Sonic Advance 2 and Sonic Rush helped us a lot on the Wii version.

Can you detail for us how Sonic Unleashed will take advantage of the Wii controller?

There's basically no difference between Sonic's basic actions in the Wii version and the PS3/Xbox 360 version. The biggest difference is in the user interface. The nature of the Wii remote will allow players to physically experience the intuitive controls implemented in the game. In order to fully utilize the hardware, we aimed to create original content, which includes new control movements and level designs. Sonic Unleashed for Wii will use both the Wii remote and nunchuk. Basic actions such as character movement and jumping are assigned to buttons, but certain actions benefitting from physical experiences use the motion-sensing functions of the Wii remote. It will offer players the physical exhilaration of high-speed, acrobatic movements.

What are some of the most exciting new gameplay elements in Sonic Unleashed?

In addition to the stages where you experience traditional high-speed action and acrobatics, we have designed various stages to offer players something new and exciting. Specifically in the later stages, we took particular advantage of the motion sensor in the Wii remote and nunchuk to design interactive combat sequences unlike anything else out there. Players can enjoy a wide variety of combat styles by using the Wii remote for different situations.

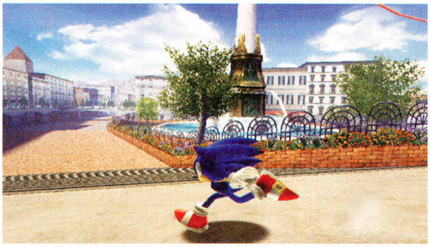
What new moves does Sonic bring to this adventure?

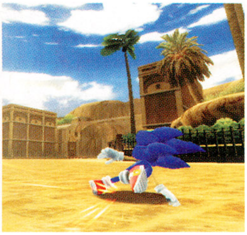
This time, in addition to familiar moves like the Homing Attack, all-new actions such as the Quick Step (to elude obstacles without slowing down) and Sonic Boosts (to hyperaccelerate and blow up surrounding objects) are introduced to realize the most powerful high-speed experience yet.

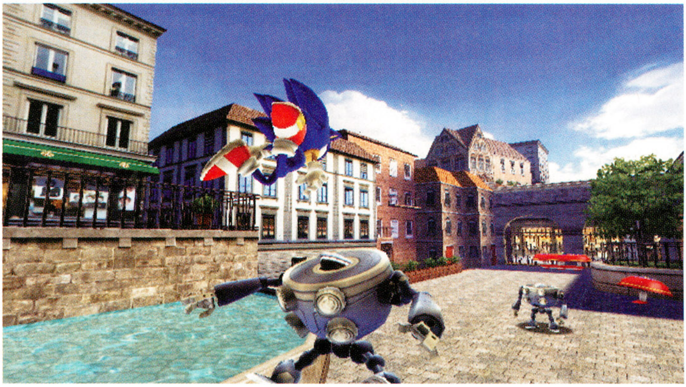
Sonic Unleashed also introduces the "action-chaining" system, where you earn more accelerating energy if you succeed in stringing together a set of actions. And repeated action chains will allow you to access special moves and select shortcuts. Basically, the more skilled you become, the more exhilaration and secrets you get from high-speed, acrobatic movements.

Will the branching paths work the same way on Wii as they do in the other versions, where the player has to quickly input a certain button sequence in midair?

Yes, the Wii version features the





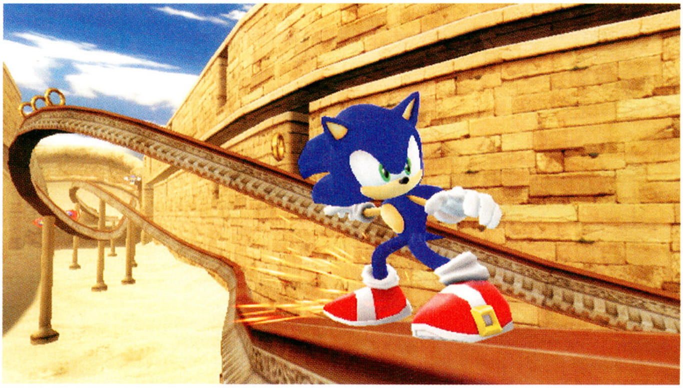


same types of sequences as the other versions.

We understand that gameplay changes significantly as day turns to night. What can you tell us about that?
Sorry, that remains a secret for now. I think we can tell you all about that before long, though.

Is there an ever-changing day-and-night cycle, or is the time of day fixed in each level or at certain points in each level?
One thing I can tell you is that there is a clear difference between day and night stages. Having said that, and to answer your question, there's no passage of time within the system in the action stages.

Can you tell us about the central hub? How does it fit into the game's overall structure, and what will players be able to do there?
In this title you travel through the game on a planet divided into several areas, moving back and forth among them. Each area has cities and villages where the player collects information to unlock new stages. Conversing with inhabitants is an important key for the story, and you can get various extra items through conversations with different people. Sonic Unleashed is full of these elements.

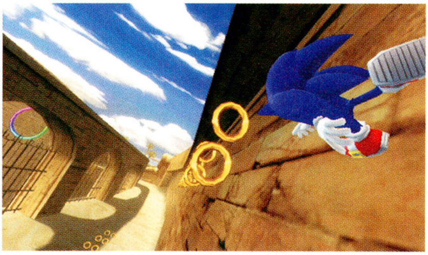


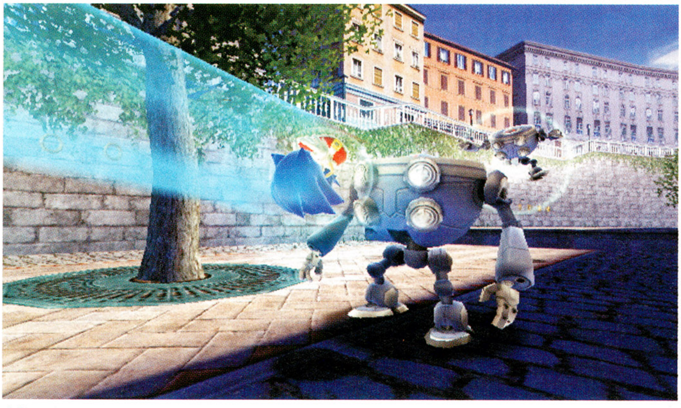
Will there be any other playable characters in the game? If so, what are their roles and how much of the game is devoted to them as opposed to Sonic?
Literally speaking, Sonic is the only playable character. However, there are various characters in the game. We'll have more to say about this soon.

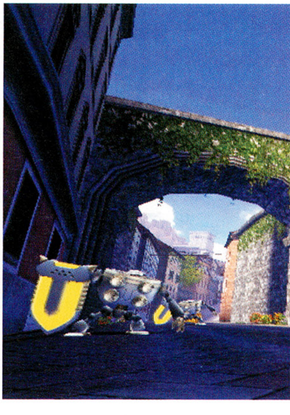
Can you talk a little bit about the game's story and how it ties in to previous Sonic games, if at all?
In what might seem like the climax in any other adventure, this title begins with a scene where Sonic stands face-to-face with Dr. Eggman. Dr. Eggman traps Super Sonic, which is Sonic transformed through the power of the Chaos Emeralds, and uses the tremendous energy from the Emeralds to awaken a being living in the planet. This greatly affects both the planet and Sonic. From there, Sonic sets off on a journey to save not only the world but also himself. This title is a new page added to his various adventures and doesn't have much to do directly with his past adventures.

What's been your approach to boss battles in Sonic Unleashed?
The design and attack variations for the boss battles are being shared with the PS3/Xbox 360 version. However, the battle style is original to Wii and makes full use of the Wii remote. It's like nothing you've seen before, and the presentation is a sight to see when Sonic is delivering the coup de grace.

In previous interviews you stated that Sonic Unleashed







began life as Sonic Adventure 3. Why the title change? Was it purely a marketing issue, or did the philosophy behind the game change as well?
The Sonic Adventure series is a monumental creation for our development team and a measuring stick when creating Sonic titles. This title was first envisioned as Sonic Adventure 3 from an ideological standpoint. But we ultimately decided to introduce further innovations while inheriting the ideology of Sonic Adventure. As a result, we thought a new title would be more appropriate for this game rather than calling it a sequel to Sonic Adventure.

As longtime fans of the series, we're very excited to see Sonic returning to his 2-D roots. Why is now the right time to bring back that classic side-scrolling gameplay?
The introduction of Sonic to 3-D brought with it new and original aspects, but on the other hand some of Sonic's 2-D nature was lost for sure, which was a shame for our development team. With Sonic Unleashed, we strongly intend to bring in good qualities of each and produce a more high-quality Sonic title. It is not about "going back." I'd put it as "taking lessons from the past." Our stance is to take the good things from Sonic's past and create something new by adding to them.

Why did you decide to go back and forth between 2-D and 3-D rather than simply sticking with one or the other?
Both the previous 2-D side-scrolling Sonic and the new 3-D action Sonic have some very good qualities. We intend to squeeze the fun of both Sonic experiences into Sonic Unleashed.

Is Sonic Unleashed for Wii running on a modified version of the Hedgehog Engine? If not, is it running on an existing engine from a previous Wii title, or an all-new engine?
For the Wii version of Sonic Unleashed, we brushed up an existing engine developed by Sega.

In your opinion, what's the key to making a great Sonic game?
The sense of speed the player feels is very important. The same is true with experiences such as surprise, excitement, and thrills. How do you make the player feel these emotions? For all games, creators design the mechanisms to produce such feelings in the forms of game systems, stage designs, and scenarios. But with Sonic, the fluid tempo and sharpness are also especially important.

Will Sonic Unleashed feature any multiplayer modes or online functionality?
No, those features won't be included in the game.

Thanks so much for your time. Is there anything else you'd like to say to our readers about Sonic Unleashed for Wii?
Look forward to more information on Sonic Unleashed, including the bits we couldn't talk about today. When the game launches, we hope you all experience the fun of Sonic Unleashed for yourselves!

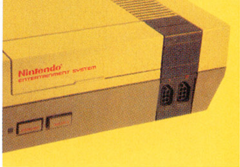
BEST *of the* BEST

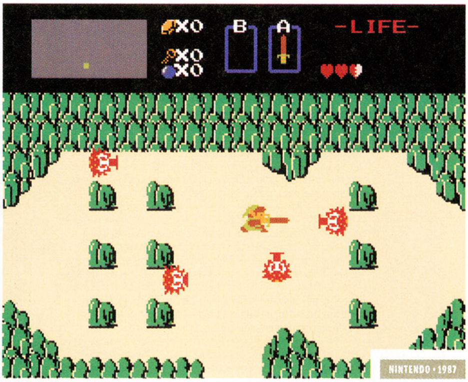
Our definitive list of the top 20 games for every Nintendo system.

We're celebrating 20 years of Nintendo Power by honoring the very best games for every Nintendo system—the titles that made the biggest impact, were the most fun, and hold up well today. This list is different from our previous NP Top 200 in that we're comparing only games from the same eras, which is the best way to judge them fairly. So, without further ado, here are the best of the best!

BY THE NINTENDO POWER STAFF

Nintendo Entertainment System

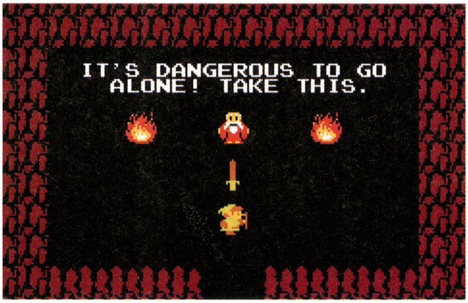




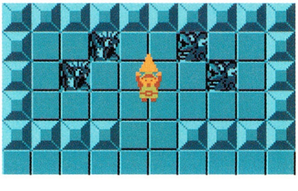
NINTENDO • 1987

01 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

Like many of the best games for the revolutionary NES, this epic action-adventure showed us brand-new ways to play with its massive overworld map, hidden dungeons, long list of weapons and items, and nonlinear stage progression. What fan could forget the secret locations of the Master Sword and the entrance to level 8, or the significance of "Grumble grumble" and "up, left, down, left"? Zelda is still great fun despite its age, a treasure waiting for anyone who's never experienced it.



Endless discoveries and countless memorable moments make the original Zelda a game for the ages.



02 SUPER MARIO BROS. 3

NINTENDO • 1990

Considered by many to be the best platformer ever made, SMB3 pushed the NES to new limits with more complex levels and new abilities that have become some of Mario's siganture moves.

03 MEGA MAN 2

CAPCOM • 1989

Mega Man's trademark cool weapons, brilliant level design, and rock-paper-scissors-style action were polished to perfection in Mega Man 2. And the music was among the best on the NES.

04 SUPER MARIO BROS.

NINTENDO • 1985

Quite simply, the game that started the modern era of video games. Revolutionary, addictive, and joyful, with gameplay that stands the test of time. It's Shigeru Miyamoto's masterpiece.

05 METROID

NINTENDO • 1987

A mix of Nintendo's two top series, Metroid combined Zelda's exploration and character upgrades with the platforming of Super Mario Bros., and added an eerie sci-fi flavor all its own.

06 MIKE TYSON'S PUNCH-OUT!!

NINTENDO • 1987

The highlight of an era in which sports games focused on arcade-style fun over realism. A simple set of punching controls, set against varied boss patterns, made this boxing title a knockout.

07 CONTRA

KONAMI • 1988

If there was a better two-player game on the NES, Bill and Lance shot it in the face. The bare-chested heroes challenged players to keep up in one of the toughest—and coolest—games ever.

08 SUPER MARIO BROS. 2

NINTENDO • 1988

Although not originally designed to be a Mario game, SMB2 stood on its own merits with unique takes on the series' trademark platforming action, world exploration, and cool secrets.

09 CASTLEVANIA III: DRACULA'S CURSE

KONAMI • 1990

Four playable characters, amped-up level designs, and alternate paths through a hefty 15 stages made the third and final NES Castlevania the pinnacle of the series' pre-Metroid-style titles.

10 NINJA GAIDEN

TECMO • 1989

From the ninja fever of the late '80s came the definitive ninja video game, loaded with challenging action, high-flying acrobatics, and—*gasp!*—story cut-scenes, a revolution at the time.

11 MEGA MAN 3

CAPCOM • 1990

Mega Man 3 featured the same type of precise action as previous Mega Man games, enhanced with new moves and characters. The Mega Man 2 bosses even returned for an encore.

12 ZELDA II: THE ADVENTURE OF LINK

NINTENDO • 1988

Side-scrolling action scenes, an RPG-style overworld map, and a sky-high challenge level made Zelda II a radical and refreshing departure from the rest of its storied series.

13 DUCKTALES

CAPCOM • 1989

As unlikely as it might seem, a game featuring Scrooge McDuck cracked our NES top 20. Old-school fans should remember, however, how fun it was to bounce on animals with Scrooge's cane.

14 CASTLEVANIA

KONAMI • 1987

An unusual whip-wielding hero, a boss roster of classic movie mosters, and perfectly tuned action have kept us coming back to the original Castlevania for more than two decades.

15 CASTLEVANIA II: SIMON'S QUEST

KONAMI • 1988

As with Zelda II, this follow-up to an action classic added RPG features to great effect. Experience points, item-collecting, and town travel put a cool twist on the series' traditional setup.

16 MANIAC MANSION

JALECO • 1990

Originally a PC game, LucasArts's quirky point-and-click adventure translated wonderfully to the NES. It's clever, funny, very open-ended, and unlike anything else on the system.

17 BIONIC COMMANDO

CAPCOM • 1988

This Capcom classic is easily one of the console's most original action games, thanks to the unique (and supercool) ability to swing from any platform via bionic arm.

18 DRAGON WARRIOR IV

ENIX • 1992

The peak of the NES's defining RPG trilogy, DWIV's innovative five-act story (with each chapter focusing on a different lead character) makes it one of our favorite old-school RPGs.

19 FINAL FANTASY

NINTENDO • 1990

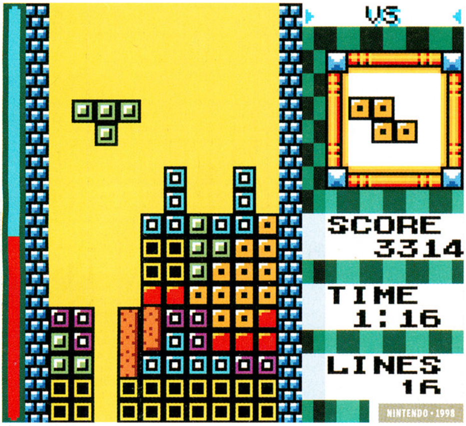
Together with the first Dragon Warrior, the inaugural Final Fantasy established the basics of console RPGs, such as epic stories, leveling up, random battles, and character classes.

20 KID ICARUS

NINTENDO • 1987

Despite its unmerciful difficulty, Kid Icarus remains one of our most treasured NES memories thanks to its unique vertically scrolling stages, fun platforming, and infectious 8-bit tunes.

Game Boy & Game Boy Color

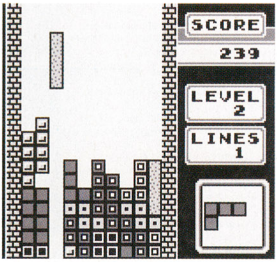


NINTENDO • 1998

01

TETRIS DX

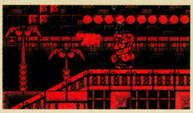
With all due respect to Pokémon, no single title meant more to the early days of handheld gaming than Tetris. The first portable version came packed with the original Game Boy and quickly spread Tetris fever from hardcore gamers to nongamers, from kids to adults. The Game Boy Color's enhanced DX edition—with its color graphics and extra modes—remained, in our minds, the best version of the game until Tetris DS took the crown eight years later. While the block-dropping superpuzzler is great on consoles, it's a perfect match for quick pick-up-and-play sessions on the go. If we could have only one game on a desert island, it'd be Tetris.



After endless hours of Tetris, we forgot our complaints that the Game Boy didn't come with a Mario game.

BEST VIRTUAL BOY GAME: VIRTUAL BOY WARIO LAND

Since 14 games were released for the Virtual Boy in North America, we're spotlighting only the best one: 1995's Virtual Boy Wario Land. It boasts the same great action-exploration the series is famous for, plus neat 3-D effects that add to the fun of searching for treasure.



02

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING DX

NINTENDO • 1998

Link's Awakening was a dream come true—a full-fledged Zelda adventure you could take anywhere. Fun fact: former Nintendo Power staffer Dan Owsen wrote the game's English script.

03

POKÉMON RED/POKÉMON BLUE

NINTENDO • 1998

This is the Pokémon pair that ushered in the world-shaking phenomenon that is Pokémon. Something about the game just won't let us stop playing until we've caught all 151.

04

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF SEASONS

NINTENDO • 2001

A magic rod that let you alter the landscape by changing the season was this game's exciting hook. Throw in an underground realm, and you get a deep and highly original Zelda title.

05

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: ORACLE OF AGES

NINTENDO • 2001

Shifting between time periods in Oracle of Ages was cool, and interfacing with Oracle of Seasons to unlock extra content was even cooler. Two new Zelda games at once? Yes, please.

06

POKÉMON GOLD/POKÉMON SILVER

NINTENDO • 2000

This second set of all-new Pokémon games took the series to the next level by adding 100 extra Pokémon and various new features and enhancements, including full-color graphics.

07

SUPER MARIO LAND 2: 6 GOLDEN COINS

NINTENDO • 1992

While the original Super Mario Land is primitive even by Game Boy standards, its sequel still shines with classic Mario hopping and bopping and impressive graphics for a handheld.

08

DONKEY KONG

NINTENDO • 1994

The only true follow-up to the arcade classic, Donkey Kong for Game Boy added to the original's four stages with 97 new ones, introducing brand-new elements and complex puzzle-solving.

09

WARIO LAND 3

NINTENDO • 2000

The pinnacle of Wario's early action-platform adventures, which are famous for his bullying attacks, his various powered-up forms, and his greedy eye toward treasure-hunting.

10

KIRBY'S DREAM LAND 2

NINTENDO • 1995

While the original Dream Land was great, the sequel introduced Kirby's now-trademark ability to steal his enemies' powers, adding a fun bit of extra strategy to a great action-platformer.

11

METAL GEAR SOLID

KONAMI • 2000

This wholly original adventure added elements from the same-titled 3-D console title to push the series' hallmark espionage action well beyond that of its previous 2-D installments.

12

METROID II: RETURN OF SAMUS

NINTENDO • 1991

The only Game Boy edition of Metroid introduced many new weapons and items that became series regulars, such as the Space Jump, Plasma Beam, Spider Ball, and Spring Ball.

13

POKÉMON PUZZLE CHALLENGE

NINTENDO • 2000

After Tetris, this block-matching game is as addictive as a puzzler gets. Although Puzzle Challenge is pretty much the same game as Tetris Attack, we give it the nod for its few extra features.

14

MEGA MAN V

CAPCOM • 1994

All of the Game Boy Mega Man games were excellent, but Mega Man V stood above the rest thanks to an original cast of celestial-themed bosses and all-new weapons such as the Mega Arm.

15

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: FALL OF THE FOOT CLAN

ULTRA • 1990

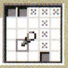
The beauty of FOTFC was its straightforward but polished action. The graphics and sound were amazing for Game Boy in 1990.

16

MARIO'S PICROSS

NINTENDO • 1995

This largely forgotten gem offered the same type of compelling picture puzzles as Picross DS, but more than a decade earlier. For our money, Picross blows away similar fads, such as Sudoku.



17

DR. MARIO

NINTENDO • 1990

If you've got puzzle-game fever, Dr. Mario is the cure. Eliminating viruses gets increasingly addictive as you play, and the three-color/shade-matching system was ideal for the Game Boy.

18

KID ICARUS: OF MYTHS AND MONSTERS

NINTENDO • 1991

This little-known follow-up to the classic NES platformer out-shines its predecessor with levels that scroll in all directions and the helpful ability to slow your descent by flapping your wings.

19

SHANTAE

CAPCOM • 2002

A beautiful half-genie fights pirates with animal transformations and snaps of her ponytail—what's not to love? The supersmooth animations pushed the Game Boy Color to new heights.

20

OPERATION C

ULTRA • 1991

Not only does Operation C have all the fast-paced shoot-'em-up thrills that you'd expect from Contra (except a two-player mode), but it's also the game that introduced the series' homing gun.

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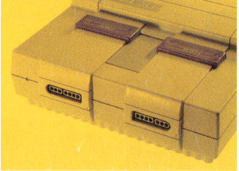
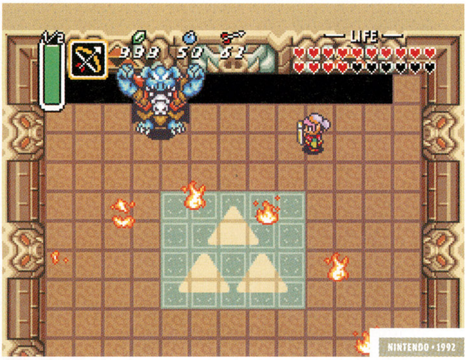
Super Nintendo Entertainment System



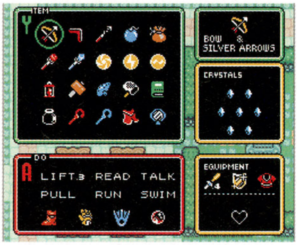


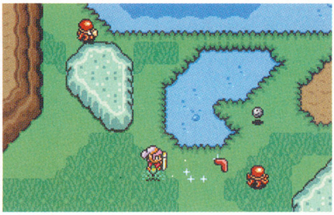
NINTENDO • 1992

01

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST

After Zelda II's radical departure from the first game, A Link to the Past returned to the series' original formula and pushed it to incredible new heights. In addition to an expansive overworld and its many dungeons, the game added an entire second map—the Dark World—to create a truly massive adventure. (This two-world theme has since been copied endlessly.) The game world is rich with colorful, detailed sprite-based graphics, complete with cool rain effects and a pseudo-3-D "Mode 7" map. The game also introduced a load of new weapons and items, many of which have become series staples. Despite great 2-D Zelda efforts on handhelds, A Link to the Past remains the perfect realization of the franchise's original style; many would argue that this is the best Zelda game ever made.





A Link to the Past is one of the most pivotal Zelda games thanks to the wealth of series features that debuted with this title.

02

SUPER MARIO WORLD

NINTENDO • 1991

With classic Mario gameplay, beautiful 2-D graphics, an astounding number of stages, and cool new additions such as Yoshi, Super Mario World is clearly one of the best platformers ever made.

03

FINAL FANTASY III

SQUARE • 1994

The unique characters and awesome soundtrack helped establish Final Fantasy III (that's FFVI in Japan) as the ultimate 2-D Final Fantasy. Who can forget the opera scene or the villainous Kefka?

04

SUPER METROID

NINTENDO • 1994

The series' sole Super NES entry took the maze-exploring, item-collecting fun of the original to glorious new heights in a timeless classic that plays just as well today as it did in 1994.

05

CHRONO TRIGGER

SQUARE • 1995

A collaboration between the makers of Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest, Chrono Trigger is one of the finest RPGs ever made. It's hard to beat time-traveling gameplay and multiple endings.

06

STREET FIGHTER II TURBO: HYPER FIGHTING

CAPCOM • 1993

During the unprecedented Street Fighter fever of the Super NES era, Turbo was the series' crowning achievement, with polished gameplay, extra speed, and a near-perfect cast of characters.

07

CONTRA III: THE ALIEN WARS

KONAMI • 1992

Just when it looked like the series couldn't get any more macho, Contra III exploded like a testosterone bomb. You fight a boss in the sky while jumping between flying missiles. 'Nuff said.

08

SUPER MARIO WORLD 2: YOSHI'S ISLAND

NINTENDO • 1995

Yoshi's first starring role came in one of gaming's best and most original platformers, with brilliant egg-throwing mechanics, an endearing visual style, and some of the catchiest chiptunes ever.

09

SUPER MARIO KART

NINTENDO • 1992

This fresh take on the racing genre popularized two-player split-screen action and added red-shell road rage to the usual twists and turns—a gaming milestone if ever there was one.

10

SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV

KONAMI • 1991

The best Super NES Castlevania makes the most of the series' trademark whip action: the weapon could be swung in any direction to attack or defend, and used to swing between platforms.

11

MEGA MAN X

CAPCOM • 1994

Mega Man X brought the traditional Mega Man gameplay up to 16-bit spec with a slightly more mature tone, hidden equipment upgrades, new moves, and significantly improved aesthetics.

12

ACTRAISER

ENIX • 1991

Part side-scrolling action game, part god sim, ActRaiser challenges players to both manage their humble followers and smite their beastly enemies in one of the console's most unique titles.

13

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES IV: TURTLES IN TIME

KONAMI • 1992

It's not often that a home port of an arcade game is even better than the original coin-op, but that's the case with TMNT IV.

14

SUPER PUNCH-OUT!!

NINTENDO • 1994

A jaw-rocking update to the NES original that changed little but made everything better. A simple focus on quick reflexes and pattern recognition made this an arcade-style classic.

15

SECRET OF MANA

SQUARE • 1993

This one-to-three-player co-op quest added more RPG elements to the Zelda-style mix of action and adventure, and once again proved that Square could do no wrong on the Super NES.

16

FINAL FANTASY II

SQUARE • 1991

Originally titled Final Fantasy IV in Japan, this first Super NES chapter in the series offered more depth, beautifully detailed monster sprites, a compelling story, and memorable characters.

17

F-ZERO

NINTENDO • 1991

At the launch of the Super NES, F-Zero showed off the system's then-amazing "Mode 7" scaling abilities to great effect, in addition to advanced drifting physics and a cool futuristic style.

18

AXELAY

KONAMI • 1992

Three reasons why Axelay is one of the best shooters ever: a mix of side-view and 3-D stages, the ability to strategically switch between weapons, and some truly impressive bosses.

19

EARTHWORM JIM

PLAYMATES • 1994

This unusual, outlandish platformer reinvigorated the genre with a wild sense of humor, intense pistol-toting action, top-notch animations, and lots of random cow abuse.

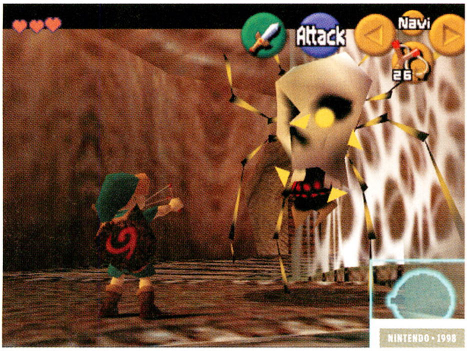
20

PILOTWINGS

NINTENDO • 1991

As challenging as it can be, Pilotwings is the kind of game you play to take a break from other games. Whether skydiving or goofing around in a rocket belt, this unique title is pure bliss.

Nintendo 64

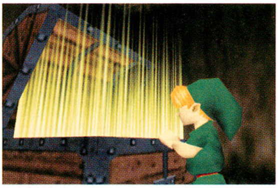


NINTENDO • 1998

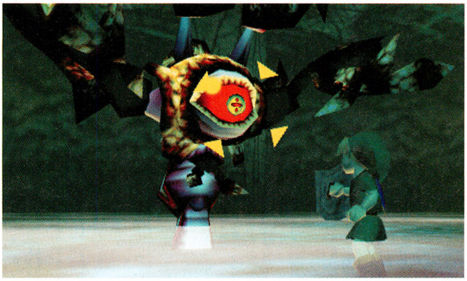
01

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME

Along with Super Mario 64, Ocarina of Time ushered in the era of 3-D gaming by showing all of us what was possible. The world of Hyrule was brought to life like never before as the series' core elements of exploration and discovery were taken to new levels of immersion. For the first time, players could stand in the middle of a dungeon and look around for clues as if they were in Link's boots. And while Ocarina still feels like the earlier Zelda titles, it evolved everything about the series, from auto-jumping to first-person aiming. Despite its first-generation 3-D graphics, Ocarina stands the test of time as one of the best—if not *the* best—adventure games ever created.



Where would 3-D gaming be if Ocarina of Time hadn't introduced the lock-on targeting system?



02

SUPER MARIO 64

NINTENDO • 1996

Perhaps no game had been as influential as Super Mario 64 since the first Super Mario Bros. over a decade earlier. True 3-D console gaming started with SM64, and it's still one of the all-time greats.

03

MARIO KART 64

NINTENDO • 1997

Thanks to the power of the N64, the Mario Kart series left the flat "Mode 7" tracks of the Super NES original behind for true 3-D courses, resulting in the console's very best racing game.

04

GOLDENEYE 007

NINTENDO • 1997

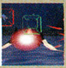
Nothing less than a multiplayer revolution. From living rooms to college dorms, players flocked to GoldenEye's four-player split-screen matches, which are still a blast to play.

05

STAR FOX 64

NINTENDO • 1997

As with Mario Kart 64, the extra muscle of the N64 CPU allowed developers to fully realize the Star Fox concept with detailed 3-D worlds and more action in what is easily the series' best game.



06

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: MAJORA'S MASK

NINTENDO • 2000

An experimental and surreal follow-up to Ocarina of Time, Majora's repeating three-day structure gives puzzle lovers a lot to think about while playing with Link's new transformations.

07

WWF NO MERCY

THQ • 2000

Even years later, Aki's wrestling games are the pinnacle of the genre—the grappling engine is just that good. No Mercy beat out WrestleMania 2000 thanks to a deeper feature set.

08

JET FORCE GEMINI

NINTENDO • 1999

There's just something eminently satisfying about killing swarms of giant alien bugs in this oft-overlooked shooter from Rare. It's like *Starship Troopers* with creepy-cute character designs.

09

WAVE RACE 64

NINTENDO • 1996

Bouncing off waves, flying off ramps, pulling flips in the air, and splashing around some of gaming's all-time best course designs make Wave Race 64 one of our very favorite racing games.

10

CONKER'S BAD FUR DAY

NINTENDO • 2001

Just your typical cute platformer...NOT! Pretty much anything goes in this hilarious M-rated critter game: kill zombies, fight poo, impersonate Keanu Reeves...you know, the usual stuff.

11

F-ZERO X

NINTENDO • 1998

Massive 30-vehicle mosh-pit-style races, crazy roller-coaster-style tracks, and incredibly fast, smooth 3-D gameplay make F-Zero X our all-time favorite in the series.

12

STAR WARS: ROGUE SQUADRON

LUCASARTS • 1998

For Star Wars fans, Rogue Squadron was like a dream come true. Thanks to some of the best graphics ever seen at the time, piloting an X-wing had never been more convincing.

13

PAPER MARIO

NINTENDO • 2001

This action-RPG hybrid brought new levels of fun interactivity to turn-based battles, and introduced one of the most distinct and cool art styles we've ever seen in a video game.

14

OGRE BATTLE 64: PERSON OF LORDLY CALIBER

ATLUS • 2000

Aside from boasting quite possibly the greatest subtitle of all time, Ogre Battle makes the list on the strength of its compelling narrative and deep strategic gameplay.

15

SUPER SMASH BROS.

NINTENDO • 1999

The original Smash Bros. has lost a little of its luster after being outdone by two amazing sequels, but it still holds its own as one of the N64's ultimate multiplayer games.

16

RAYMAN 2: THE GREAT ESCAPE

UBISOFT • 1999

The first Rayman was a solid platformer, but creator Michel Ancel really came into his own with The Great Escape. This sequel oozes charm and remains the highlight of the limbless one's career.

17

MARIO GOLF

NINTENDO • 1999

A very deep and full-featured golf simulation (despite the overalls, talking turtles, and apes in ties), Mario Golf is that rare sports game that you don't have to be a sports fan to enjoy.

18

ROCKET: ROBOT ON WHEELS

UBISOFT • 1999

A brilliant first effort from Sucker Punch (who went on to develop the Sly Cooper trilogy), this little-known platformer is a blast to wheel around in thanks to the game's very responsive controls.

19

POKÉMON SNAP

NINTENDO • 1999

This Pokémon side game is one of our favorites in the franchise. Snapping the perfect photo, framed properly, at just the right moment is a blast and teaches you real photo-taking skills.

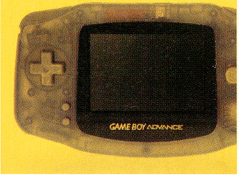
20

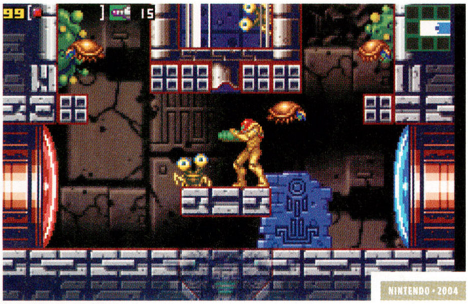
BLAST CORPS

NINTENDO • 1997

Before Grand Theft Auto was all the rage, Rare-developed Blast Corps offered action-game fans their best opportunity to drive different vehicles and blow stuff up.

Game Boy Advance

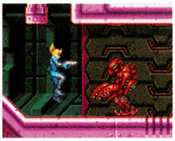



NINTENDO • 2004

01

METROID: ZERO MISSION

We love the Metroid Prime games, but for us the Metroid series is at its best in 2-D. And with apologies to the Super NES masterpiece Super Metroid, we pick Metroid: Zero Mission as the best of the bunch. It packs in the action, platforming, exploration, and spooky alien atmosphere that was great in the earlier installments, and supercharges all of it. There's always a new weapon or suit upgrade around the corner to keep you playing, and with finely tuned acrobatic controls at your fingertips, even backtracking is fun. Zero Mission is the perfect expression of the Metroid concept.


Zero Mission is the game that introduced us to Zero Suit Samus—need we say more?

02 CASTLEVANIA: ARIA OF SORROW

KONAMI • 2003

Of course Aria of Sorrow offered superb action and exploration-driven gameplay; what set it apart from previous Castlevanias was the ability to steal enemies' souls to learn new skills.

03 MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA

NINTENDO • 2003

Not only is Superstar Saga an incredible RPG, featuring fresh ideas and Paper Mario's cool, interactive turn-based battle system, but it's also one of the funniest games we've ever played.

04 ASTRO BOY: OMEGA FACTOR

SEGA • 2004

Whether you're a fan of the classic Astro Boy property or not, there's no denying that this action/shooter hybrid was packed with deep mechanics, incredible fun, and an awesome story.

05 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE MINISH CAP

NINTENDO • 2005

Possibly the greatest handheld Zelda after Link's Awakening, Minish Cap's big world/small world puzzles are one of the series' best hooks. The cute Wind Waker-style graphics are also a nice.

06 WARIOWARE, INC.: MEGA MICROGAME$

NINTENDO • 2003

The original—and in many ways, still the best—collection of quick-fix minigames starring everyone's favorite gold-grubbing grump. WarioWare's rapid-fire challenges are great on the go.

07 GUNSTAR SUPER HEROES

SEGA • 2005

Action fans clamored for a sequel to the original Genesis classic for 12 years until Gunstar Super Heroes finally answered the call with guns blazing. Games don't get much more intense than this.

08 DRILL DOZER

NINTENDO • 2006

This endearingly offbeat action title comes from Game Freak, the developers behind the Pokémon franchise. Using the L and R Buttons to spin your giant drill in either direction is instant fun.

09 METROID FUSION

NINTENDO • 2002

While not quite as satisfying as the more traditional Metroid: Zero Mission, the experimental Fusion introduced cool new elements to the series, such as ledge-grabbing and a stronger narrative.

10 ADVANCE WARS

NINTENDO • 2001

Nintendo's first North American entry into its military-strategy series manages to challenge players without ever becoming too brain-numbingly complex. It's an ideal handheld time-waster.

11 POKÉMON RUBY/ POKÉMON SAPPHIRE

NINTENDO • 2003

The Pokémon fever that began on Game Boy continued to the GBA with this pair of prettier, more-refined sequels. Major new features included two-on-two battles and Pokémon contests.

12 CASTLEVANIA: HARMONY OF DISSONANCE

KONAMI • 2002

Harmony of Dissonance wasn't the first adventure-style Castlevania game on GBA, but it was the first one produced by Koji Igarashi. It's deep and challenging, and looks great.

13 GOLDEN SUN

NINTENDO • 2001

Camelot Software Planning's triumphant return to the role-playing genre shone brightly thanks to stunning visuals, refined gameplay, and the ingenious Djinn system.

14 MEGA MAN & BASS

CAPCOM • 2003

Aside from being arguably the best-looking game starring the original Mega Man, the game kicked things up a notch by including Mega Man's rival, Bass, as a unique playable character.

15 FIRE EMBLEM

NINTENDO • 2003

This turn-based tour de force brings the same top-notch strategy play found in Advance Wars to the fantasy realm. This cool mix—plus a fascinating story—cements Fire Emblem's legendary status.

16 MEGA MAN ZERO 2

CAPCOM • 2003

Incredibly challenging (yet fair), this superb hardcore action game boasted awesome level design and clever pattern-based bosses coupled with precise controls and pristine animation.

17 GOLDEN SUN: THE LOST AGE

NINTENDO • 2003

Picking up right where its predecessor left off, The Lost Age intriguingly continues the saga from a different point of view, recasting one of the original game's antagonists as the hero.

18 MARIO GOLF: ADVANCE TOUR

NINTENDO • 2004

The links action in this GBA hit is even better than that of its prettier console counterparts, thanks to a deep RPG mode that adds stat building and a storyline to the normal putts and pars.

19 MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG

NINTENDO • 2004

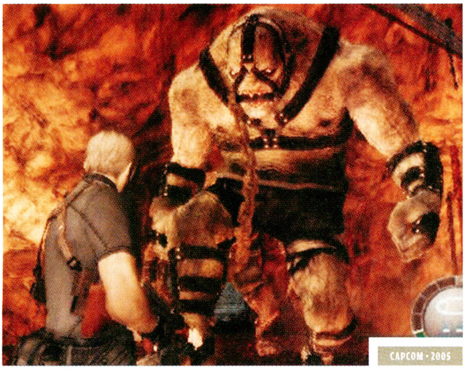
The spiritual successor to Game Boy's update of the big ape's original arcade classic, Mario vs. Donkey Kong has the mustachioed one using his acrobatic skills to solve platforming puzzles.

20 WARIO LAND 4

NINTENDO • 2001

Wario's treasure-hunting outing on GBA is one of his best, with dazzling 2-D graphics, great action and platforming, and a twist: you have to escape each level under a time limit, Metroid style.

Nintendo GameCube



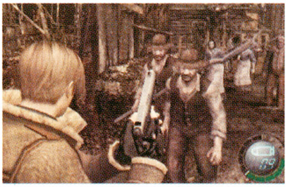
CAPCOM • 2005

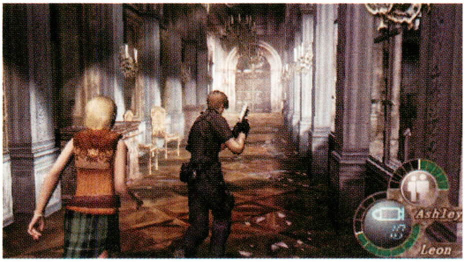
01

RESIDENT EVIL 4

It takes an exceptional third-party game to top Nintendo on its own system, and by our measure Capcom's Resident Evil 4 is the only title to manage it. It doesn't hurt that the GameCube's Mario and Zelda entries weren't quite as mind-blowing as usual, but you can't take anything away from Capcom's incredible accomplishment with RE4. The publisher bet big on a radical change for its hit series, trading the slower-paced "haunted house" approach for a more visceral, amped-up action experience. Despite fewer creepy hallways, the game still delivers the scares and keeps the tension level high, plus it offers some of the best graphics seen on the GCN. This extraordinary game feels so polished and perfected that we can't imagine the developers cut even a single corner in realizing their initial vision.

Gorgeously grotesque, Resident Evil 4's incredibly detailed graphics pushed the GameCube to all-new heights.





02

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

NINTENDO • 2003

Wind Waker's amazing visuals make it one of the most distinct Zelda titles, and it plays as good as it looks. If it weren't for the so-so sea travel, this might be our all-time favorite in the series.

03

SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE

NINTENDO • 2001

This vastly improved successor to the revolutionary N64 classic is a milestone in multiplayer gaming and a love letter to the world of Nintendo...and the best way to wear out a Control Stick.

04

METROID PRIME

NINTENDO • 2002

We couldn't imagine how Metroid could be done well in 3-D...until Retro did it. The first Prime—without the irksome light/dark twist of its sequel—remains an almost-perfect action-adventure game.

05

SOUL CALIBUR II

NAMCO • 2003

The second chapter in the weapon-based fighting series is still our favorite, and we're not just saying that because Link is in the GameCube version (although he does rock the house down).

06

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE

NINTENDO • 2002

While a short step behind Mario's usual efforts, Sunshine is still a top-tier platformer loaded with fun stages and memorable moments. The water-pack-less challenges especially stand out.

07

PIKMIN

NINTENDO • 2001

Nintendo's most original action title in years, Pikmin effortlessly mixes exploration and cute critter crowd control. Despite Pikmin 2's new features, we feel the original nailed the concept the best.

08

PAPER MARIO: THE THOUSAND YEAR DOOR

NINTENDO • 2004

Beautifully stylized graphics, a deep and engaging action-RPG mix for battles, and unmatched wit make The Thousand Year Door our favorite of the excellent Paper Mario games.

09

RESIDENT EVIL

CAPCOM • 2002

A stunning re-imagining of the classic that kicked off the survival-horror genre. Spooky, unsettling, and often legitimately scary, this is the pinnacle of the old-school, pre-RE4 Resident Evil titles.

10

VIEWTIFUL JOE

CAPCOM • 2003

Henshin-a-go-go, baby! Joe's ability to fight while slowing down or speeding up time—and to look like a badass while doing it—makes this one of the most fun and original action titles in recent years.

11

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

UBISOFT • 2003

This overlooked gem from Rayman creator Michel Ancel earned a devoted following with inspired art direction, a socially relevant story, and the greatest female protagonist in video game history.

12

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!

NINTENDO • 2003

While the two-characters-per-kart twist didn't make much of a difference, Double Dash!! offered some of the best tracks, smoothest controls, and craziest karts the series has ever seen.

13

BILLY HATCHER AND THE GIANT EGG

SEGA • 2004

Who knew that rolling around a giant egg and using it as a weapon would be so fun? Apparently the makers of Sonic did. Too bad gamers were scared off by the goofy character designs.

14

LUIGI'S MANSION

NINTENDO • 2001

Luigi's Mansion is criminally underrated. Just remembering how cool it was to use the flashlight, bust ghosts, and hear Luigi's shaky cry of "Maaario" makes us want to play it again right now.

15

METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

KONAMI • 2001

A significantly enhanced version of one of the best action-adventure games of all time, and arguably the top title in the Metal Gear series to date.

16

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

UBISOFT • 2003

At the time of its release, Sands of Time was a much-needed shot in the arm for the fading action-platform genre. It brought us supercool moves and incredible sequences of acrobatic feats.

17

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS

SEGA • 2003

Though decidedly old-school, Sega's pirate-themed RPG stands apart on the strength of its eminently likable cast and imaginative world begging to be explored.

18

DONKEY KONG JUNGLE BEAT

NINTENDO • 2005

More people need to play this game! The first title from the Nintendo studio that created Super Mario Galaxy, Jungle Beat mixes the bongo controller with amazing platforming.

19

ANIMAL CROSSING

NINTENDO • 2002

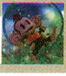
Although it's nothing like Nintendo's other hits, Animal Crossing is just as addictive. It gives us a place to simply exist and enjoy, trading pulse-pounding action for charming daily discoveries.

20

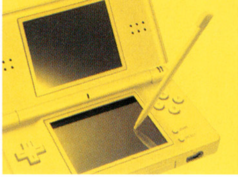
SUPER MONKEY BALL

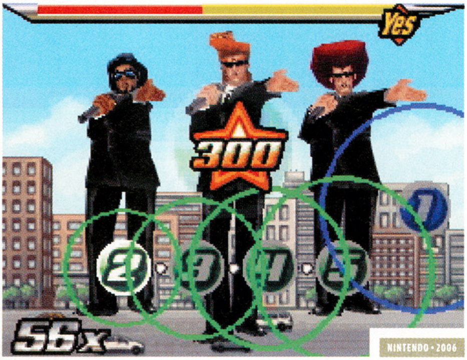
SEGA • 2001

This simple ball-rolling game packs a long list of quick-fix levels that hark back to classic coin-ops. If arcade gaming were still thriving today, we'd be dumping all our quarters into SMB.



Nintendo DS & DS Lite



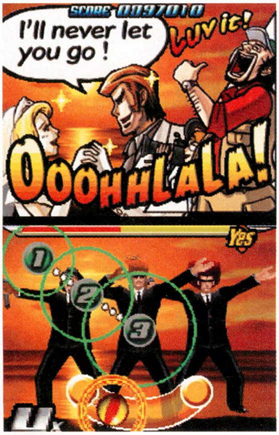


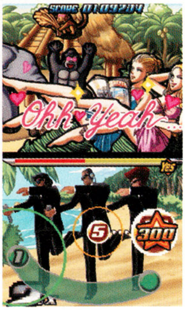
NINTENDO • 2006

01

ELITE BEAT AGENTS

Of all our top picks, this one is probably our biggest upset because the DS has an especially strong lineup; there are several games that we could call the best. In the end, Elite Beat Agents was the only title that we could all agree upon, which speaks volumes for how much this game has won over its fans. Its fun, party atmosphere is infectious—EBA shows us that we shouldn't always take gaming so seriously, that we should let loose and have silly fun. The rhythm-based touch-screen tapping could be done only on the DS, and the game is simple enough for newcomers to pick up yet offers plenty of challenge for experts. Perhaps more than any other game, EBA always leaves us smiling, and that's pretty special.





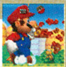
Through the hilarious story scenes and the agents' enthusiastic dancing, even songs we don't normally like get our blood pumping.

02

NEW SUPER MARIO BROS.

NINTENDO • 2006

It took nearly 15 years to get a brand-new 2-D Mario game, but it was definitely worth the wait. New SMB featured Mario at his classic best, aided by fresh power-ups like the Mega Mushroom.



03

MARIO KART DS

NINTENDO • 2005

With an all-star collection of the series' best tracks and addictive wireless multiplayer action, Mario Kart DS is an endlessly fun handheld game and one of the very best titles in its series.

04

THE WORLD ENDS WITH YOU

SQUARE ENIX • 2008

Coming from a publisher that's not known for taking risks these days, The World Ends with You is one of the most bravely experimental titles on a platform renowned for innovation.

05

TETRIS DS

NINTENDO • 2006

With a long list of play modes and perfect play over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection—all infused with Nintendo nostalgia—Tetris DS is our favorite edition of the timeless block-dropping puzzler.

06

CASTLEVANIA: DAWN OF SORROW

KONAMI • 2005

There are a lot of great Castlevania games on handheld systems, but Dawn of Sorrow may be the best. Konami refined Aria of Sorrow's formula by adding more weapons and soul powers.

07

CONTRA 4

KONAMI • 2007

Totally old-school and totally intense, Contra 4 rocks the DS with classic 2-D run-and-gun action and nonstop firepower. This game will kick your butt and you will like it.

08

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS

NINTENDO • 2007

With full stylus control, Phantom Hourglass breathes new life into the series' classic weapons, items, and actions. There's so much to do that it feels more like a console title than a handheld game.

09

PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY JUSTICE FOR ALL

CAPCOM • 2007

The first Phoenix Wright was a refreshing work of genius, and the sequel was even better due to new features and a better story.

10

SONIC RUSH ADVENTURE

SEGA • 2007

The hedgehog's modern-day handheld offerings are always top-notch, and Sonic Rush Adventure continues the tradition with tight controls, gorgeous backdrops, and catchy tunes.

11

TRAUMA CENTER: UNDER THE KNIFE

ATLUS • 2005

Trauma Center offered a completely new type of gameplay—one that's about saving people, not defeating them—and let us do things with the touch screen that we never thought possible.

12

PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE CURIOUS VILLAGE

NINTENDO • 2008

Professor Layton is the rare game that anyone can appreciate, featuring clever casual-gamer-friendly puzzles wrapped up in a great story with lots of exploration.

13

CASTLEVANIA: PORTRAIT OF RUIN

KONAMI • 2006

Two heads are better than one in Portrait of Ruin, which lets you switch between two main characters with distinct abilities. Settings beyond the castle confines are another nice addition.

14

ADVANCE WARS: DUAL STRIKE

NINTENDO • 2005

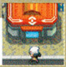
The first DS Advance Wars outshines the second thanks to a bigger focus on the supercool CO Powers in addition to both games' great use of the dual screens to keep the player well informed.

15

POKÉMON DIAMOND/ POKÉMON PEARL

NINTENDO • 2007

Using Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, Diamond and Pearl finally took the series' battles and Pokémon trading to the next logical step by bringing together players from around the world.



16

NINJA GAIDEN DRAGON SWORD

TECMO • 2008

We once wouldn't have thought it possible, but Dragon Sword proved that a fast-paced hardcore action game can be awesome using only the stylus...and while holding the DS sideways.

17

WARIOWARE: TOUCHED!

NINTENDO • 2005

The WarioWare games have become a great test bed for new hardware features; Touched! still shines as one of the best examples of how to turn a stylus and touch screen into fun times.

18

MARIO & LUIGI: PARTNERS IN TIME

NINTENDO • 2005

Partners in Time doubled our pleasure by adding baby versions of Mario and Luigi to the mix, allowing for nifty new abilities while retaining the previous game's humor and action.

19

ANIMAL CROSSING: WILD WORLD

NINTENDO • 2005

This souped-up version of the revolutionary GameCube original makes perfect use of the DS's unique features, allowing players to use the touch screen to shape—and decorate—their own world.

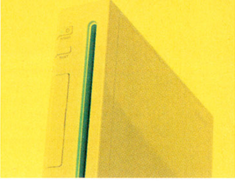
20

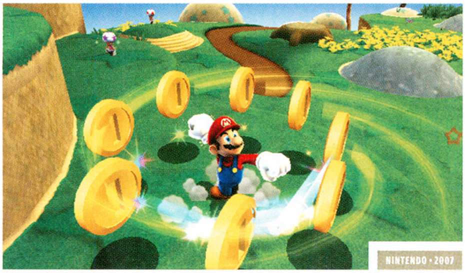
COOKING MAMA

MAJESCO • 2006

We're not gourmet chefs, but we had a blast chopping, grilling, and sautéing via the touch screen. As with so many DS games, innovative touch-screen use was a tasty recipe for success.

Wii

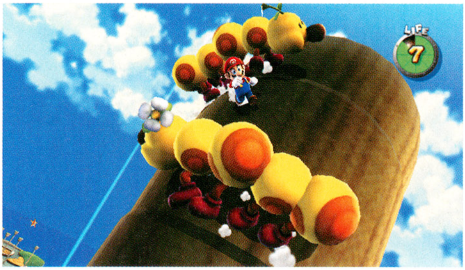




01 SUPER MARIO GALAXY

Once we tallied our votes for each of the top-20 lists, we were surprised to find that Galaxy was the only Mario title to nab a number-one spot. The game was also our only unanimous winner. This is a top-tier Nintendo franchise at its very best, with spot-on controls, innovative new features, and tons of content, all polished to perfection. Galaxy turned everything that fans love about the Mario series upside down—literally—and stuffed in more than enough levels, secrets, and features to satisfy any action-platform fan. Galaxy is a showcase title for Wii: it shows off some of the console's very best graphics and has fun motion controls. As fondly as we remember our world-changing first go with Super Mario 64, Galaxy is better. We can't think of higher praise than that.

Mario's Wii outing may be his best, with so many amazing moments that we lost count.



02 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS

NINTENDO • 2006

Twilight Princess was the Zelda game fans had been begging for—a more-mature-looking title with a darker tone, but with all the cool action and puzzles the franchise is known for.

03 SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL

NINTENDO • 2008

Brawl has it all—it's the ultimate mix of quantity and quality. Knocking your friends into oblivion is just plain fun, and the game has so much content that you'll likely never get bored.

04 METROID PRIME 3: CORRUPTION

NINTENDO • 2007

After the Prime trilogy's so-so sophomore effort, Corruption ended the series on its highest note thanks to spot-on Wii-remote aiming that took first-person action to a new level on consoles.

05 MARIO KART Wii

NINTENDO • 2008

Easily the series' best-looking game, and in our minds the best-playing, as well. Welcome additions like bikes, aerial tricks, and incredible 12-player Wi-Fi races earn this Kart the gold cup.

06 NIGHTS: JOURNEY OF DREAMS

SEGA • 2007

For years, gamers lost sleep hoping for a sequel to high-flying Saturn game NiGHTS. It finally arrived exclusively on Wii, bringing with it loads of magical charm and excellent music.

07 ZACK & WIKI: QUEST FOR BARBAROS' TREASURE

CAPCOM • 2007

This charming point-and-click adventure tested our wits with crafty puzzles and dozens of clever uses of the Wii remote. The game also looked great and was laced with subtle humor.

08 Wii SPORTS

NINTENDO • 2006

Easily the most revolutionary title so far this generation, Wii Sports led Nintendo's charge back to the top with simple yet addictive games. We're *still* hooked on Bowling and Tennis.

09 NO MORE HEROES

UBISOFT • 2008

Plasma swords, absurd levels of violence, an unforgettable set of ridiculously cool bosses, and a town called Santa Destroy where everything is named after wrestling holds—gotta love it.

10 SUPER PAPER MARIO

NINTENDO • 2007

By mixing classic 2-D Mario running and jumping with the Paper Mario series' RPG-style exploration and storytelling, the Wii installment gives us the best of both worlds and then some.

11 RESIDENT EVIL: UMBRELLA CHRONICLES

CAPCOM • 2007

The Wii remote is a perfect fit for light-gun games, a fact that wasn't lost on the developers of Umbrella Chronicles, a deeper-than-usual arcade-style shooter.

12 WARIOWARE: SMOOTH MOVES

NINTENDO • 2007

The perfect party series plus the perfect party console equals the perfect party game. Smooth Moves shows off how fun the Wii remote is like few other games, and spreads smiles all around.

13 FIRE EMBLEM: RADIANT DAWN

NINTENDO • 2007

A direct sequel to GameCube's Path of Radiance, Radiant Dawn introduces a number of welcome gameplay refinements and unravels an intriguing plot full of twists and turns.

14 SONIC AND THE SECRET RINGS

SEGA • 2007

This peculiar take on the Sonic franchise thrust our hero into the world of *Arabian Nights* while sticking to the high-speed platforming we expect from the hedgehog.

15 BOOM BLOX

ELECTRONIC ARTS • 2008

With its deep physics, bountiful play modes, and fantastic use of motion controls, EA's Boom Blox is one of the most surprisingly addictive Wii games to date.

16 BULLY: SCHOLARSHIP EDITION

ROCKSTAR GAMES • 2008

The original Bully broke all the rules with its go-anywhere, do-anything gameplay and unique school setting. Scholarship Edition improved upon it with new content and Wii controls.

17 OKAMI

CAPCOM • 2008

With its Zeldalike play style and unrivaled watercolor aesthetic, Okami is an adventure packed full of cool gameplay mechanics—mainly a Wii remote-guided paintbrush—and Japanese lore.

18 Wii FIT

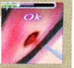
NINTENDO • 2008

Whether you're up for a workout or just looking for a few fun balance games, Wii Fit's groundbreaking software and neat-o Balance Board offer a can't-miss Wii experience.

19 TRAUMA CENTER: NEW BLOOD

ATLUS • 2007

Aside from a new story and characters, New Blood's big addition was a two-player co-op mode. There's nothing like having a friend at your side when a patient's life is on the line.



20 GUITAR HERO III

ACTIVISION • 2007

GHIII is a perfect match for the Wii party crowd, and the guitar-embedded Wii remote makes this version the life of the party with added rumble and speaker sounds.

SHOWDOWN
LAN 2008

WE'RE BACK!

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Sept. 26-28 Peoria Civic Center, Peoria, IL

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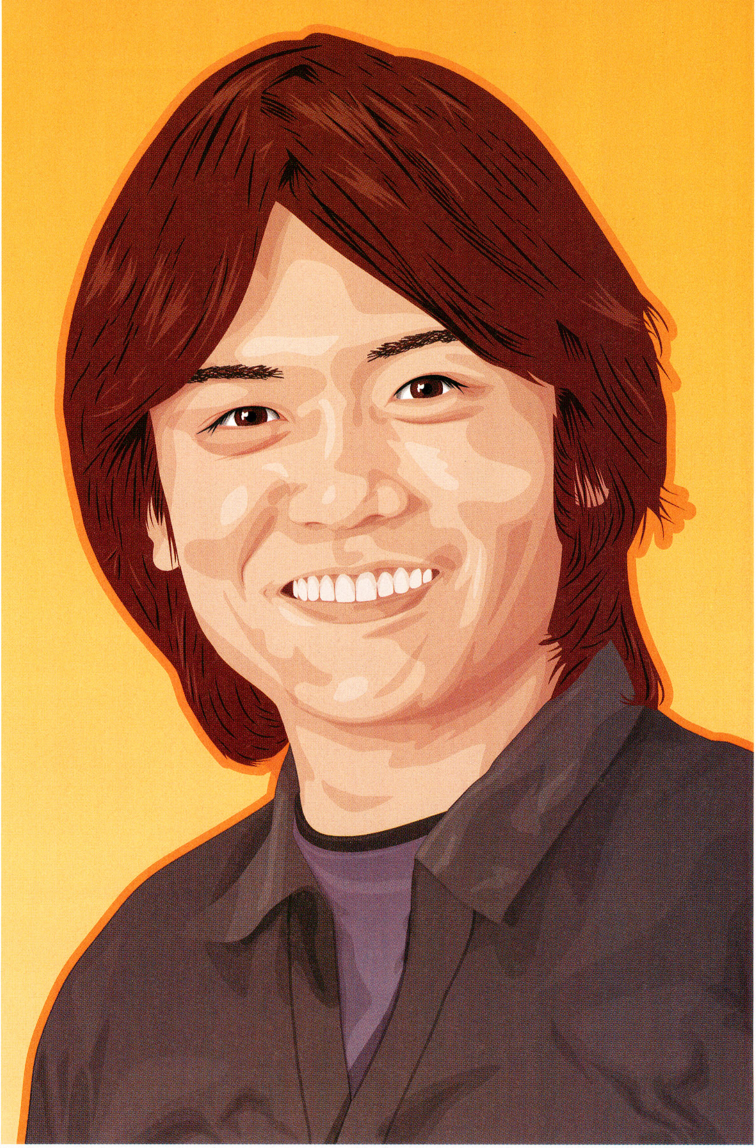
Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
August 3, 1970

BIRTHPLACE
Tokyo, Japan

POSITION
President, Sora Ltd.

BEST KNOWN FOR
Guiding the Super Smash Bros. series, making it OK for guys to like pink

FAVORITE FOOD
No comment

CURRENT PROJECTS
Unrevealed

Masahiro Sakurai

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

If there's a formula for gaming success, Masahiro Sakurai must know it. He's not just the man responsible for directing the incredibly popular Super Smash Bros. Brawl—he's also one of the series' original creators. As the visionary that has been with Smash Bros. every step of the way, Sakurai has helped establish the franchise as one of Nintendo's top brands and quenched fans' relentless thirst for information via more than 300 daily updates at the Smash Bros. Dojo (www.smashbros.com). But there's more to Sakurai than just this one series. Long before he formed his own studio, Sora Ltd., Sakurai worked in the employ of HAL Laboratory, where at age 19 he designed and directed the first game in the Kirby series (Kirby's Dream Land for Game Boy), thus propelling the pink puffball to stardom as one of Nintendo's leading characters. We're not sure what Sakurai will be working on next, but given his track record, we're eager to find out—just as we were eager to probe into what makes the talented game designer tick.

NINTENDO POWER
Can you tell us how you got into the video game business?

MASAHIRO SAKURAI
I have a vivid memory from my childhood of being incredibly impressed that objects displayed on a TV screen could be manipulated. I got involved because I wanted to challenge that sense of wonder about games.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
I did not have a specific goal for what I wanted to be.

We understand that when you worked on the first Kirby game, you were only 19. What was it like directing a game at such a young age?
Because everyone else was older than me, in my mind, I felt rather uncomfortable giving them directions.

How has the video game industry changed during the time you've been involved with it?
I'm concerned that it's losing its ability to get people to dream. I feel the environment in which players are able to enjoy the pure fun of gaming has deteriorated as more information about game creators becomes available and as unsolicited commentating on games becomes rampant.

Why did you decide to leave HAL and eventually form your own company, Sora Ltd.?
It is because I believe that making stuff in the same company with the same staff for an entire career is out of place in this age. Also, the collaborations with other talents should be emphasized.

Since you used action figures to create the animations in Super Smash Bros., we have to ask: are you an action-figure collector yourself?
I am not an action-figure collector myself. I have started collections of things in the past, but in most cases I soon got bored.

What are some of the coolest tricks that you've seen players do in a Smash Bros. game that perhaps you didn't expect?
There's no particular attack or defense by a player that comes to mind, but replay data that players send to us always surprises me. We send these out to users via the Smash Service every day, so please have a look at them when you have the opportunity.

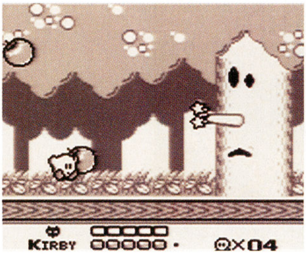
How much of the information that's listed on the Smash Bros. trophies did you already know from memory, and how much of it did you have to look up?
I still double-check things even when the information seems to be obvious, because I might be wrong.

Who is your personal favorite video game character?
I like everyone. In particular, I tried to know everything about the characters in Smash Bros. so I could highlight the most attractive qualities of their personalities.

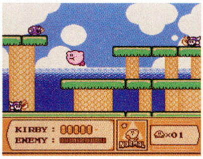
> *"I like everyone. In particular, I tried to know everything about the characters in Smash Bros. so I could highlight the most attractive qualities of their personalities."*

GAMEOGRAPHY

You'll notice a lot of pink in Sakurai's titles. With the exception of Meteos, Kirby has been in every game he's worked on!



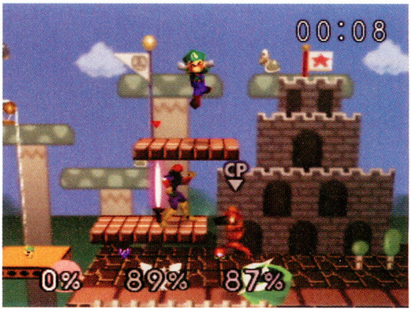
KIRBY'S DREAM LAND
1992, GAME BOY
DIRECTOR, CHIEF DESIGNER



KIRBY'S ADVENTURE
1993, NES
DIRECTOR, GAME DESIGNER

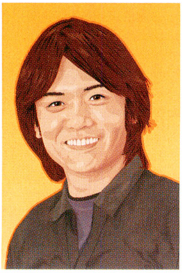
BEAM
×04
HELPER
SC: 6550

KIRBY SUPER STAR
1996, SUPER NES
DIRECTOR



SUPER SMASH BROS.
1999, NINTENDO 64
DIRECTOR

Power Profiles



Why do you think Super Smash Bros. continues to be so popular even though interest in traditional fighting games has dwindled?
I think it's because it is, in fact, not a fighting game. The nature of it is similar to a sports game in which the player shoots an opponent as if it were a ball. The results are different [every time you play], which, I think, is also a unique and attractive quality of the game.

Would you prefer to make games with established game characters, or create a game featuring totally new characters?
Both are attractive to me. All I can do is to do my best in each case in order to live up to people's expectations.

Meteos seems very different from the other games you've worked on. Why did you decide to work on a smaller-scale project like that (as opposed to a large-scale project such as Smash Bros.), and what are the advantages and disadvantages?
I was given the task of producing a falling-block puzzle game. I did not think this type of puzzle game would be popular or even receive a modicum of attention. However, I also thought that such a prejudice would limit the number of possibilities in our industry, and I wanted to create a falling-block puzzle game that was totally different from the others.

What's another game genre you'd like to try your hand at?
I'll do anything as long as it's fun: RPG, adventure, simulation, or FPS. Even nongame projects are fine as long as they're fun.

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
I enjoy freely manipulating objects that are displayed on a TV screen.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
Depending on what the "difficult problem" is, I adapt to the circumstances in order to deal with it. I might get mad at my staff, I might try to calm them down, or I might take care of the issue myself.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect?
There is no single individual in particular that comes to mind, but I admire anyone who creates excellent games.

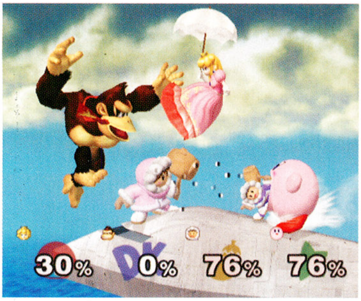
Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
Probably George Lucas. I think *Star Wars* is one of the most outstanding pieces in any medium.

What is your favorite nongaming pastime?
I enjoy going for drives.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
I would like to have a doppelganger so that I might be able to accomplish two or three times more than I do now.

> *"I'll do anything as long as it's fun: RPG, adventure, simulation, or FPS. Even nongame projects are fine as long as they're fun."*

GAMEOGRAPHY



SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE
2001, GAMECUBE
DIRECTOR

KIRBY AIR RIDE
2003, GAMECUBE
GENERAL DIRECTOR

SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL
2008, Wii
DIRECTOR

KIRBY: NIGHTMARE IN DREAM LAND
2002, GAME BOY ADVANCE
CHIEF DIRECTOR

METEOS
2005, DS
PRODUCER, GAME DESIGNER

GU

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CLASSIC REPLAY

NINTENDO POWER
SWEEPSTAKES
AUGUST
2008

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Wii
SELECT
HOME
START
x
y
a
b

GRAND PRIZE

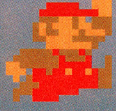
1 WINNER! You don't have to be a gnarly-thumbed, 20-year vet of video gaming to appreciate the best games to appear on Nintendo systems the past two decades. You just have to be lucky! This issue's Grand Prize winner will receive a Classic Controller™, a Wii Points™ card redeemable for 2,000 Wii Points, and five Wii™ titles and five Nintendo DS™ titles to be chosen from the list of Wii and DS games that appear in Nintendo Power's Best of the Best feature this month.

SECOND PRIZE

10 WINNERS! Each of our 10 nearly-as-lucky Second Prize winners will receive a Classic Controller and a Wii Points card redeemable for 2,000 Wii Points to help build their collection of classic titles for Virtual Console. They can choose from Nintendo Power's top picks or ignore our sage advice and head to the Wii Shop Channel to choose their own faves.

TO ENTER: Send us a postcard listing your full name, mailing address, phone number, and email address (if you have one). Address it as follows:

**Nintendo Power Sweepstakes V. 231
c/o Future US
1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510
Brisbane, CA 94005**



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1. No purchase is necessary to win and as a contestant you have not yet won. Entries must be received no later than September 1, 2008. The winners will be chosen on or about September 17, 2008, and will be notified by e-mail (or regular mail). The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. The sponsor of the contest is Future US, Inc. ("Future US"), 1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510 Brisbane, CA 94005. Future US cannot be responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries, nor shall it be liable for unsuccessful efforts to notify a winner.

2. The prizes are the following: The prize that is available for one (1) contestant is one 2,000-point Wii™ Points Card (of which the MSRP is $20.00), one Classic Controller (of which the MSRP is $19.99), any five games from the Top 20 Nintendo DS Games List on pg. 77 (estimated MSRP total of around $175), and any five games from the Top 20 Wii Games List on page 78 (estimated MSRP total of around $250). The prize that is available for ten (10) contestants is one (1) 2,000-point Wii™ Points Card (of which the MSRP is $20.00) and one Classic Controller (of which the MSRP is $19.99). The prizes are nontransferable and no substitutions will be allowed.

3. Winners will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries and the decision of Future US shall be final. You may obtain the name of the winner by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above. Future US reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to cancel or suspend this drawing should causes beyond its control corrupt the administration, security, or proper play of the drawing.

4. It is not necessary to buy Nintendo Power magazine to become a contestant. Everyone who mails in an entry will be considered as participants.

5. Entrants must be at least 13 years of age. If a winner is a minor, the prize will be awarded in the name of the winner's parent or legal guardian, who is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state and local taxes, and that winner must also provide a signed parental or guardian consent form, provided by the sponsor, within 7 days of notification attempt. Failure of the minor to return the guardian consent form will result in the forfeiture of the prize and selection of an alternate winner, who will be chosen through a random drawing from the remaining eligible entries.

6. Return of any prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected.

7. The winners may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt; failure to do so upon request will result in forfeiture of the prize. By acceptance of the prize, the winners agree to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Winners are responsible for paying any income taxes on the value of the prize received.

8. Future US is not responsible for any damages or expenses that winners might incur as a result of this contest or the receipt of any prize. In addition, contestants release and hold Future US and its employees harmless from any and all damages and claims of any kind in connection with the contest. Future US reserves the right to confirm all winners for eligibility and compliance with the rules and regulations.

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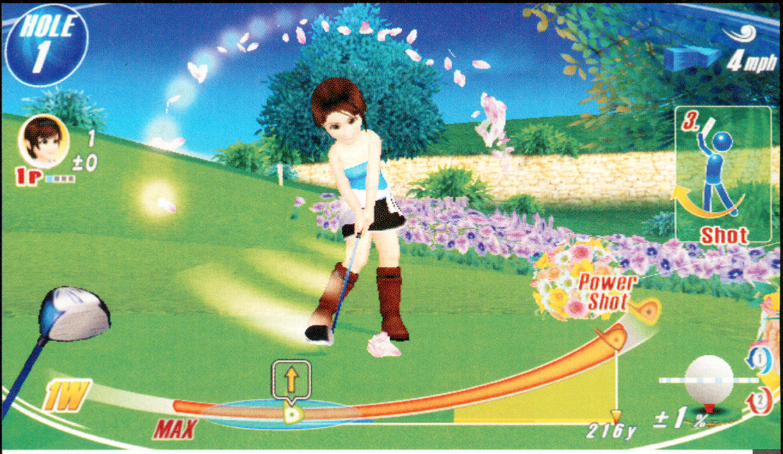
11. A contestant may enter by printing their name, address, daytime telephone number and e-mail address (if they have one) and the name of the prize drawing on a 3x5 card and mailing it to: Nintendo Power Sweepstakes V. 231, c/o Future US, 1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510 Brisbane, CA 94005. Only one entry per person will be accepted.

REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

We hit the greens in **We Love Golf!** for Wii, the newest links classic from Camelot and Capcom.



WE LOVE GOLF! 88

FINAL FANTASY IV 86

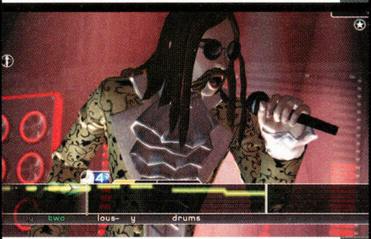
Wow, it's bigger than I thought. I see why you work so much now!

Chelsea

HARVEST MOON: ISLAND OF HAPPINESS 87

First, that disease in Africa...

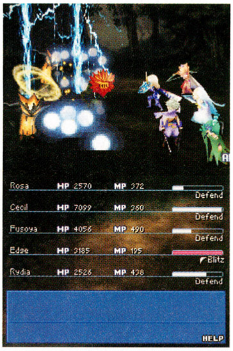
TRAUMA CENTER: UNDER THE KNIFE 2 87



ROCK BAND 90

Carnival Games 90
Civilization Revolution 89
Final Fantasy IV 86
Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo's Dungeon 88
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness 87
The Incredible Hulk (DS) 88
The Incredible Hulk (Wii) 90
Rock Band 90
Trauma Center: Under the Knife 2 87
We Love Golf! 88

Allow me to give you something—a gift, to remember our meeting by.



Rosa HP 2570 MP 372
Defend
Cecil HP 7099 MP 360
Defend
Fusoya HP 4056 MP 490
Defend
Edge HP 3185 MP 195
Blitz
Rydia HP 2526 MP 438
Defend

A IV to be Reckoned With

FINAL FANTASY IV

RATING: 9.0
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **SQUARE ENIX/MATRIX SOFTWARE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

It took a certain amount of nostalgia to enjoy the 2006 DS remake of Final Fantasy III, which mixed modern production values with antiquated game design. Not so with Final Fantasy IV—the combination of stronger source material and more-extensive refinements leave this DS remake feeling as well-crafted and modern as the best original RPGs being made today. Dozens of updates, from the major (a complete rebalancing of the party character abilities) to the minor (removing the need to purchase individual arrows), have brought the game up to contemporary standards of balance and usability. A particularly welcome addition is the new Augment system, which adds an element of character-building to FFIV for the very first time, giving players the option to transfer abilities from one character to another or even to learn completely new ones. The game has also received a significant difficulty spike, with bosses in particular getting deadlier attacks and more complicated patterns. The heightened level of challenge can be jarring at times, but there's nothing so tough that you can't get past it with some trial and error or a half hour spent leveling up your party.

The most noticeable upgrade is in the game's production values, which have elevated Final Fantasy IV from a first-generation Super NES game into one of the most state-of-the-art titles in the DS library. The game uses roughly the same 3-D engine as Final Fantasy III, but with several significant improvements. The battles load more quickly now, despite the larger party sizes and much flashier battle animations. The extra screen on the DS is put to great use, featuring automaps, detailed battle data, and even a thought bubble from your party leader. Many of the game's elaborate event scenes are now voiced, and voiced well—although you can turn that off entirely if you aren't prepared for the trauma of learning that you've been mispronouncing Cecil and Yang's names for 17 years.

The only part of Final Fantasy IV that feels at all dated is the story, and even that doesn't feel old-fashioned in a bad way. FFIV was made in an era when characters were built around heroic archetypes, not around neuroses, and there wasn't enough space on a cartridge to waste on irrelevant subplots and woe-is-me brooding. That makes for a tale that is focused and extraordinarily fast-paced—nary an hour passes without a death, betrayal, or miraculous recovery, and those events are dwelled upon for no more than a few seconds before it's back to the action. FFIV's story may have all the depth of a Saturday-morning cartoon, but considering how often RPGs fail at tackling heavier fare, the classic heroes-versus-villains yarn is actually sort of refreshing. The well-animated and nicely stylized event scenes do a wonderful job of bringing the story to life, and being both brief and action-packed, are always a welcome diversion.

The developers have done everything they needed to do to win over a new generation of Final Fantasy IV fans, but they've done disappointingly little to appeal to the existing ones. Though Final Fantasy IV veterans will appreciate the upgraded visuals and increased level of challenge, this remake offers little in terms of new content. The Augment system provides a few new abilities, Rydia's new Whyt summon spell comes with a series of surprisingly fun touch-screen minigames, and there are a few new event scenes and a beautiful CG-animated opening movie, but that's about it. Every area is a map-for-map remake of its previous iteration, and there are no new subquests, characters, or dungeons (nor are there any of the dungeons added in Final Fantasy IV Advance). If you played through FFIV Advance only a few years ago, you probably aren't going to find enough here to justify a double dip. But if you haven't played FFIV in years, or you haven't played it at all, this is the definitive version of the game, and one of the best role-playing games on the DS.

—CASEY L.

WRITERS' BLOCK

NP JUST TURNED 20. WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING 20 YEARS FROM NOW?

Justin Cheng

I'll still be waiting for the release of Shenmue III. It'll happen eventually!

Chris Hoffman

That will be the year 200X, right? By then I will be Hoff Man, a new boss in Mega Man 29. My weakness will be heat, and my special attack will involve pie.

Tom Holoien

I'll be answering reader mail from fans still demanding that Mother 3 comes to Game Boy Advance in North America.

Casey Loe

Probably still trying to unlock all the Super Smash Bros. Brawl characters without having to play Subspace Emissary. I'm comin' for ya, Wolf! Only 247 matches to go....

Chris Shepperd

I'll be stifling back motion sickness while playing Wario Tennis: Duelin' Aces on the Ultra Virtual Boy 64 (now featuring THREE colors!).

George Sinfield

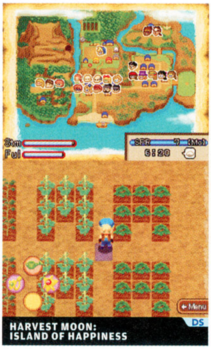
Playing Pokémon.

Steve Thomason

In 20 years, I will have finally completed my secret mission to transform the magazine into Sega Visions. Our cover will be Shenmue III.

Chris Slate

I'll still be writing fake reader letters to Tom about Mother 3, and blackmailing Sega execs to keep them from releasing Shenmue III. My evil plans continue!

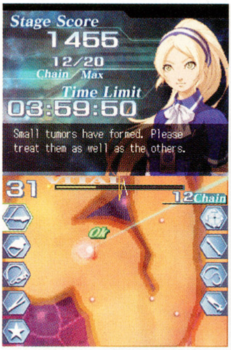


HARVEST MOON: ISLAND OF HAPPINESS

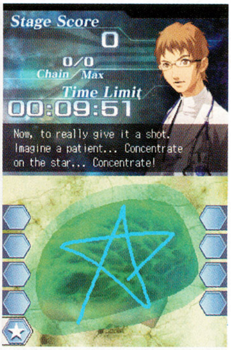
HARVEST MOON: ISLAND OF HAPPINESS

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **MARVELOUS ENTERTAINMENT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Don't let the title and cute graphics fool you; Island of Happiness is a lot of work. In one of the most laborious Harvest Moon adventures to date, the money comes in at a trickle, making friends is a chore, and exploration is slow. And the game doesn't give you any hints as to the best way to spend your hard-earned cash. But the payoff is fair—there are plenty of things to do and people to meet if you're willing to slog it out. The near-exclusive use of the touch screen to control every aspect of farm life is a questionable decision—it doesn't feel very accurate or intuitive. A few changes to the farming system take some getting used to as well, including having to water certain crops more than once a day (so much for my long-standing policy of not reading game manuals). At least the developers tried to freshen things up a bit, plus the characters are a little less bland than usual for Harvest Moon—the Daniel Plainview-esque mineral speculator is...ahem, pure gold. —CHRIS SH.



Small tumors have formed. Please treat them as well as the others.



Now, to really give it a shot. Imagine a patient... Concentrate on the star... Concentrate!

Good Medicine

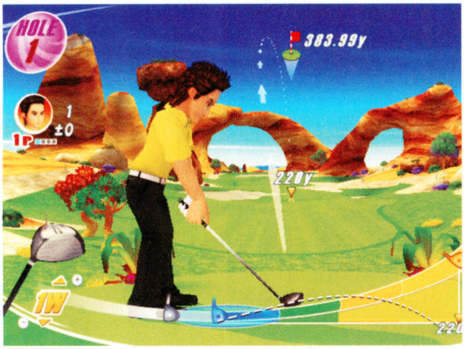
TRAUMA CENTER: UNDER THE KNIFE 2

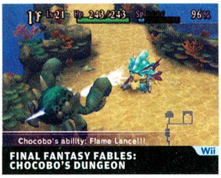
RATING: 8.5
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **VANGUARD**
ESRB: **TEEN**

I'd almost forgotten how good Trauma Center is on DS. Not that the Wii installments weren't enjoyable, but pointing with a Wii remote doesn't come close to replicating the precise, tangible, ultraresponsive feel of the DS's touch screen. As it was in the original Trauma Center: Under the Knife, so it is in the sequel—there's something uniquely compelling about performing finger gymnastics to suture, drain, cut, inject, and more, all while battling a time limit and patients' constantly dropping vital signs. The action is fast and intense, and even though the gameplay is based on surgery, it feels more like an arcade game than something you'd learn in medical school—there are even new nonsurgical stages, but they're not as fun as defusing the bomb in the first Under the Knife.

While I had a blast mending broken bones, removing tumors, and dealing with nefarious mystery ailments, it all felt very familiar; the game has hardly evolved beyond its predecessor. Most of the tools and procedures are the same as in the first Trauma Center, and despite Atlus's claims to the contrary, the story still can't get away from the man-made disease called GUILT. Luckily, the writing is very well done, and the interesting plot and characters kept me hooked for the duration; fans of the original should especially enjoy catching up with the returning cast. Players should also appreciate the adjustable difficulty. While Normal mode maintains the challenge the series is known for, the Easy setting puts medical miracles within reach of the average non-MD.

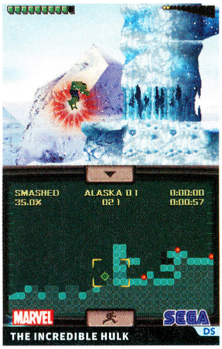
Though I have no qualms giving Under the Knife 2 a hearty recommendation, I hope the series won't continue to rest on its laurels—next time new tools, operations, and plot elements will be a must. —CHRIS H.





FINAL FANTASY FABLES: CHOCOBO'S DUNGEON

FINAL FANTASY FABLES: CHOCOBO'S DUNGEON



THE INCREDIBLE HULK

Nice Shot!

WE LOVE GOLF!

RATING: 8.5
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAMELOT
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

As anyone who has played a Mario Golf title can tell you, developer Camelot knows how to make a great golf game. We Love Golf! definitely continues the trend with its fun, accessible gameplay and overall charming, anime-esque aesthetic. Sure, there's a mild learning curve because there's not a one-to-one correlation between your movements and your in-game swing (it's more like Camelot's traditional three-button-press mechanic with motion controls), but once you get the hang of it you see how much easier and more accurate it is. (If only I could hit as many birdies in real life!) My main complaints are that playing while you're sitting on the couch can be a bit awkward—but not impossible—and that there aren't quite as many courses as I'd like. That said, neither is a major issue: the former is laziness talking (though swinging the remote for long periods of time can get tiring), and the latter is more greed than a real need for more course variety.

Besides, when you factor in the unlockable Capcom-themed costumes (including the North American-exclusive Ken from Street Fighter and Morrigan from Darkstalkers), the Mii support (even if the Mii heads on regularly proportioned bodies look creepy), the numerous minigames (many of which will help improve your golfing skills), and the online play, We Love Golf! is a great overall package. The online capability in particular makes the game a more-than-worthwhile purchase—when we played online for this review, it was a lag-free experience. We can't vouch that it will remain that way when We Love Golf! hits store shelves, of course, but we can say that you'll be hard-pressed to find a more enjoyable golf game on Wii regardless. —JUSTIN C.

FINAL FANTASY FABLES: CHOCOBO'S DUNGEON

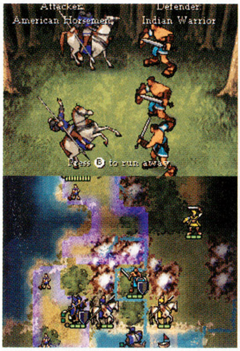
RATING: 7.5
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER: H.A.N.D.
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

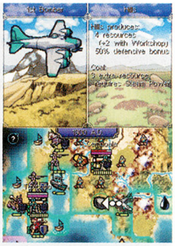
I confess that I'm not the biggest fan of randomly generated dungeon-crawlers, but Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo's Dungeon kept me hooked nonetheless. The main reason that I remained interested while similar titles put me to sleep is the game's user-friendliness; unlike in some efforts in the genre, you don't have to rebuild your character from experience level one every time you enter a dungeon, you don't lose your equipment if you're defeated in battle (although you do lose any money and non-equipped items you haven't put into storage), and you can use midlevel checkpoints to easily navigate larger dungeons. It also helps that the story is intriguing and that the game looks and sounds great: the CG is perhaps the best yet on Wii, and the music features arrangements of some of the most memorable tunes of past Final Fantasy games. But while Chocobo's Dungeon is aiming for accessibility, it hasn't ignored depth—there are tons of items and equipment, robust weapon-customization options, and a cool ability-granting job system. The developers have also thrown in several minigames and side quests, including some hardcore challenges. Chocobo's Dungeon doesn't address one of my usual criticisms about this type of game—the randomly generated levels can get dull and tedious—but all the extra trappings make that fault easy to overlook. If you've ever been tempted by the dungeon-crawling genre, Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo's Dungeon is a great place to get your feathers wet. —CHRIS H.

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

RATING: 7.5
PLATFORM: DS
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: AMAZE ENTERTAINMENT
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

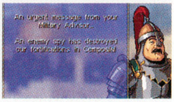
A nice, clean 2-D action game, The Incredible Hulk features locations from the recent film but is largely unencumbered by story elements. Bruce Banner is scarce; the game is all Hulk rage, allowing you to pummel bad guys and obstacles from start to finish. The green giant has a strong arsenal of regular-powered and Rage moves, and health packs are well-placed, but the gameplay hints that are scattered throughout usually come after you've already had to master the moves they describe. The bottom screen displays a map of the current level—useful when you're looking to smash every enemy. Scout mode, triggered by a touch-screen tap, lets you scroll freely to size up enemy forces. The game is not very ambitious, but what it does, it does well. —GEORGE S.





Hills produces:
4 resources
(+2 with Workshop)
50% defensive bonus

Coal
3 extra resources
Requires Steam Power



An urgent message from your Military Advisor...

An enemy spy has destroyed our fortifications in Cempoala!

Moving History

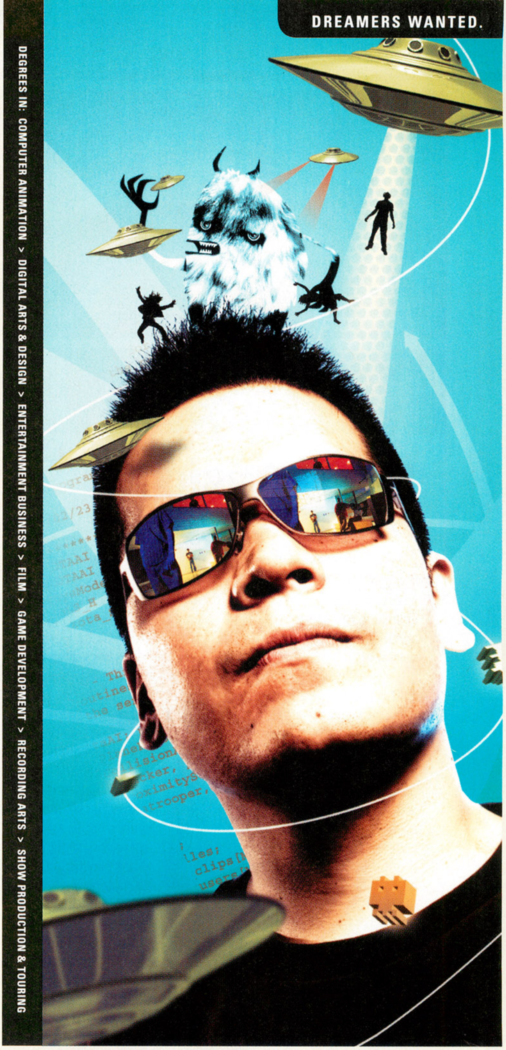
CIVILIZATION REVOLUTION

RATING: 7.5
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **2K GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **FIRAXIS GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

Having said no to drugs my entire life, I'm not sure I've ever encountered anything quite so addictive as Sid Meier's Civilization series. The DS version is no exception, making it a great way to pass the time during long road trips or agonizing flight delays. As in previous iterations, players choose a civilization and lead it through history as they see fit. You can build a militaristic state dedicated to conquering the globe or follow the path of enlightenment by focusing on cultural achievements. No two play sessions are ever the same, and Firaxis is to be applauded for not watering down the experience as so many other developers are wont to do with DS ports.

Unfortunately, the transition to the handheld platform isn't without issues. Foremost among them is that the maps are simply too small. Previous games let you choose the size of the world, but here everything feels cramped and you're forced to deal with warmongering neighbors before you've really had a chance to settle in. The AI is also a bit wonky at times, and niggling annoyances like bonus naval units being deployed in self-contained waters will leave you scratching your head. The top screen could have been put to better use, as well. Rather than provide helpful information about the highlighted city or unit, it displays a nicely drawn but ultimately useless illustration of the target. I can understand the desire to give the game a bit more visual pizzazz, but it shouldn't come at the expense of functionality.

Despite Revolution's shortcomings, I find myself itching for more, which is ultimately the sign of a good strategy game. If you're a fan of the genre, there are few better ways to get your fix on the go. —STEVE T.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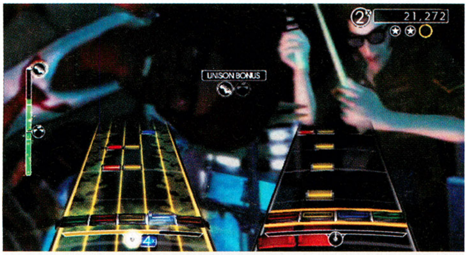
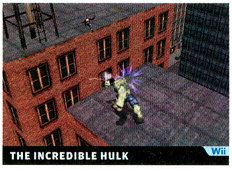
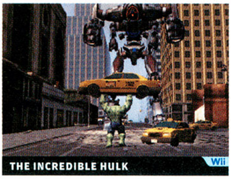
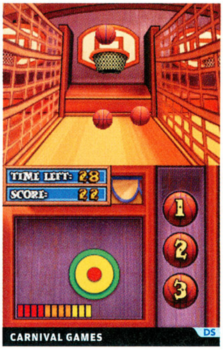



THE INCREDIBLE HULK


THE INCREDIBLE HULK

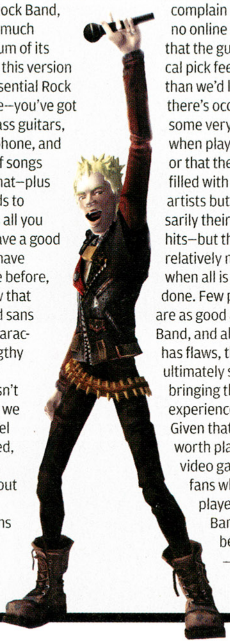

CARNIVAL GAMES

Band Basics

ROCK BAND

RATING: 8.0
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **MTV GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **HARMONIX**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Guitar Hero meets Karaoke Revolution, plus drums—that's the premise of Rock Band, but the whole is much more than the sum of its parts. Certainly, this version gives you the essential Rock Band experience--you've got your lead and bass guitars, drums, a microphone, and a good variety of songs (63 in all). And that—plus a group of friends to rock out with—is all you really need to have a good time. But if you have played the game before, you should know that this is Rock Band sans customizable characters and the lengthy multiplayer tour mode. That doesn't ruin the fun, but we can't help but feel a bit disappointed, especially since, despite coming out half a year after the other versions of the game, the Wii iteration has nothing to make it stand out from the crowd—even the five songs that are new to the series are available as downloadable content for all but the PS2 version. (Even Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock utilized the Wii remote's features, but Rock Band does not.) Of course, we could also complain that there's no online capability, that the guitar's physical pick feels looser than we'd like, that there's occasionally some very slight lag when playing guitar, or that the track list is filled with well-known artists but not necessarily their greatest hits—but those are relatively minor issues when all is said and done. Few party games are as good as Rock Band, and although it has flaws, this version ultimately succeeds in bringing that festive experience to Wii. Given that, it is well worth playing for video game music fans who haven't played a Rock Band game before. —JUSTIN C.



CARNIVAL GAMES

RATING: 4.5
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **2K GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **CAT DADDY GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

2K's Carnival Games for Wii is a fun, pick-up-and-play party game that many enjoyed, but unfortunately the fun factor doesn't translate well to the DS. The basic gameplay is unchanged: you play carnival-based minigames to earn prizes like new clothing and accessories. This is more fun now that you can wander the carnival, but the difficulty of the games in the DS version seem very arbitrary, and this makes them hard to enjoy. They're almost always either too frustrating (requiring you to tap or drag across the touch screen with precise accuracy and timing that can be hard to master, especially when your hand is blocking your view) or too easy (offering little challenge to obtain the highest-level prize). It can be fun at times, but not often enough to save this game from mediocrity. —TOM H.

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

RATING: 3.5
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **EDGE OF REALITY**
ESRB: **TEEN**

With a big-budget movie comes a subpar video game adaptation—that seems to be the rule. So it should be no surprise that The Incredible Hulk on Wii is...not so good. The combat is serviceable, with unlockable and upgradeable moves, but it can get repetitive. Additionally, the tacked-on motion controls (waggle the nunchuk to heal, for example) are more annoying than immersive. Then there's the graphical quality: pop-in and blue-hued fog abound—so much so that it's like the Jade Giant is smashing his way through Atlantis instead of New York City. That may be the price we have to pay in exchange for having such an open, highly destructible world to play with, but the vastly superior The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction—which was released three years ago on GameCube—managed a similar feat without suffering as badly. —JUSTIN C.

ALSO THIS MONTH

Atari's Wii update to their **Alone in the Dark** survival-horror franchise was looking good the last time we saw it, but they wouldn't provide us with a copy for a timely review.... Likewise, Activision wouldn't send us review copies of **Guitar Hero: Aerosmith** (for Wii) or **Guitar Hero: On Tour** (for DS).... You can tell it's the summer movie season. THQ's **WALL*E**, Sierra's **Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor**, and Brash's **Space Chimps** are coming to Wii and DS.... If you'd rather spend your summer on the diamond, check out Atari's **Backyard Baseball 2009** for Wii.

N4G

news for gamers

nintendo
Wi-Fi
connection
310°
Nintendo Announces
Wii Pay & Play
300°
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mini SD
e Great Wii Internal
y Debate
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Wii
Wii Sports
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Analysts: hardw
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Wii News and Info

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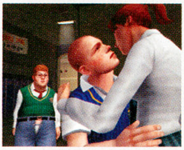
CRAZY EIGHTS

Last month, most games we reviewed got sixes and sevens, but there were a few standouts: GRID (8.5), Etrian Odyssey II: Heroes of Lagaard (8.5), and Space Invaders Extreme (8.0). While all three are DS titles, the odds were in the handheld's favor given that 11 of the 13 reviewed games were on DS. That's not to say that the other games were terrible by any means—there were several sevens last month, too. Remember, a seven means it's a good game and well worth checking out, even if it's not necessarily a must-buy.

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

Wii				
TITLE	**SCORE**	**PUBLISHER**	**VOL.**	**ESRB**
Alien Syndrome	6.0	Sega	220	T
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	224	E
Baroque	3.0	Atlus	227	T
• Battalion Wars 2	7.5	Nintendo	222	T
Ben 10: Protector of Earth	N/A	D3PA	223	E10+
Blast Works: Build, Trade, Destroy	8.5	Majesco	229	E
Bleach: Shattered Blade	N/A	Sega	222	T
Bomberman Land	5.0	Hudson	226	E
Boogie	5.5	Electronic Arts	220	E10+
Boom Blox	8.0	Electronic Arts	229	E
Brunswick Pro Bowling	6.0	Crave	219	E
Bully: Scholarship Edition	8.5	Rockstar	227	T
Carnival Games	7.0	Global Star	220	E
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	N/A	Disney Interactive	229	T
Code Lyoko: Quest for Infinity	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E10+
Cranium Kabookii	N/A	Ubisoft	224	E
Crash of the Titans	6.5	Sierra	221	E10+
Cruis'n	N/A	Midway	224	E
CSI: Hard Evidence	N/A	Ubisoft	225	M
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party	8.0	Konami	221	E10+
Dave Mirra BMX Challenge	4.0	Crave	220	E
Death Jr.: Root of Evil	7.0	Eidos	230	T
Deca Sports	N/A	Hudson	229	E
Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed	7.0	THQ	227	T
• Dewy's Adventure	7.0	Konami	221	E
Donkey Kong: Barrel Blast	6.5	Nintendo	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 3	N/A	Atari	223	T
Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors	7.0	Square Enix	226	T
Driver: Parallel Lines	5.0	Ubisoft	219	M
Emergency Heroes	N/A	Ubisoft	230	E10+
• Endless Ocean	7.5	Nintendo	225	E
• FIFA 08	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn	9.5	Nintendo	222	E10+
Furu Furu Park	N/A	Majesco	225	T
Game Party	N/A	Midway	224	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	8.0	Sierra	222	E
• Ghost Squad	7.0	Sega	223	T
Godzilla Unleashed	5.5	Atari	223	E10+
The Golden Compass	4.0	Sega	224	E10+
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core	8.0	Aksys Games	222	T
• Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock	9.0	Activision	222	T
Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law	6.5	Capcom	224	T
High School Musical: Sing It!	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
The House of the Dead 2 & 3 Return	7.0	Sega	227	M
Indoor Sports	N/A	Konami	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Iron Man	5.5	Sega	229	T
Jenga	N/A	Atari	223	E
Jumper	N/A	Brash	226	T
Karaoke Revolution Presents American Idol Encore	N/A	Konami	226	E
Kawasaki Quad Bikes	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Kidz Sports: Basketball	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Kidz Sports: Ice Hockey	N/A	Destineer	225	E
Kung Fu Panda	N/A	Activision	230	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	7.5	LucasArts	230	E10+
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Link's Crossbow Training	6.5	Nintendo	223	T
Looney Tunes: Acme Arsenal	3.5	WB Games	221	E10+
• Madden NFL 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	220	E
Manhunt 2	7.5	Rockstar Games	223	M
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	223	E
• Mario Strikers Charged	8.5	Nintendo	219	E10+
• Medal of Honor Heroes 2	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Mercury Meltdown Revolution	6.0	Ignition	221	E
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption	10	Nintendo	220	T
MiniCopter: Adventure Flight	N/A	Aksys	227	E
MLB 2K8	6.5	2K Sports	227	E
MLB Power Pros	6.5	2K Sports	222	E
• MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
My Horse and Me	N/A	Atari	225	E
My Word Coach	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E
MySims	7.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
Namco Museum Remix	N/A	Namco Bandai	222	E
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	T
Need For Speed ProStreet	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	E10+
Nicktoons: Attack of the Toybots	N/A	THQ	223	E
• NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams	9.0	Sega	224	E
Ninja Reflex	N/A	Electronic Arts	227	E10+
• Nitro Bike	3.5	Ubisoft	225	E10+
No More Heroes	8.0	Ubisoft	226	M
Obscure: The Aftermath	7.0	Ignition	227	M
Octomania	N/A	Conspiracy	227	E
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure	6.5	Namco Bandai	225	T
Opoona	7.0	Koei	227	E10+
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection	7.5	Crave	227	E10+
• Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	N/A	Konami	227	E
Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords	N/A	D3PA	224	E10+
• Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	6.5	Ubisoft	223	E10+
Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	223	M
Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis	N/A	Rockstar	222	E
Samurai Warriors: Katana	7.5	Koei	224	T
Sega Bass Fishing	5.0	Sega	227	E
Sega Superstars Tennis	8.0	Sega	227	E10+
Showtime Championship Boxing	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E10+
The Simpsons Game	4.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Smarty Pants	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
• Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity	7.0	Sega	225	E
Soulcalibur Legends	6.5	Namco Bandai	223	T
Speed Racer	N/A	Warner Bros. Interactive	229	E
Summer Sports: Paradise Island	N/A	Destineer	227	E
Super Mario Galaxy	9.5	Nintendo	223	E
• Super Smash Bros. Brawl	10	Nintendo	226	T
Super Swing Golf Season 2	6.5	Tecmo	224	E10+
Target: Terror	N/A	Konami	227	M
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
Tomb Raider Anniversary	6.5	Eidos	223	T
Top Spin 3	7.0	2K Sports	229	E
Transformers: The Game	5.5	Activision	219	T
Trauma Center: New Blood	8.0	Atlus	223	T
Victorious Boxers: Revolution	N/A	XSEED	222	T
We Ski	6.0	Namco Bandai	229	E
Worms: A Space Oddity	6.0	THQ	227	E10+
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	6.5	THQ	222	T
WWII Aces	3.0	Destineer	226	T
Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure	9.0	Capcom	222	E

REVIEWER NOTES



BULLY: SCHOLARSHIP EDITION

Some people seem to have trouble wrapping their head around the fact that Bully: Scholarship Edition isn't necessarily about being a bully. You can pick fights, sure, but it's also about going to classes (and being rewarded for it), taking on odd jobs, and dealing with being a social outcast. It's also an extremely innovative adventure that makes good use of Wii's controls. —CHRIS H.

CROSSWORDS DS

I was right in the middle of playing one of this year's major games (here's a hint: it ends in "IV") when I started playing Crosswords DS. Once I started, I couldn't stop. In fact, I'm going to solve some more crossword puzzles right after I write this!

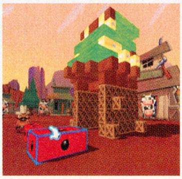
—JUSTIN C.

SPEED RACER (Wii)

While the Wachowski siblings' *Speed Racer* film certainly had some issues, I enjoyed it overall—which pretty much describes my experience playing Speed Racer: The Videogame on Wii. The game controls well, and the racing itself is fun and recreates much of the excitement of the movie, but you have to contend with some pretty tough AI opponents who seem to stick with you no matter what you try.

—JUSTIN C.

NINTENDO DS				
• Advance Wars: Days of Ruin	8.5	Nintendo	225	E10+
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	223	E
American Girl: Julie Finds a Way	N/A	THQ	224	E
Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney	8.0	Capcom	226	T
Are you Smarter Than a 5th Grader?	N/A	THQ	223	E
Arkanoid DS	6.5	Square Enix	230	E
Assassin's Creed: Altair's Chronicles	7.5	Ubisoft	226	T
Balls of Fury	N/A	Destination Software	222	E10+
• Bleach: The Blade of Fate	8.5	Sega	222	T
• Bomberman Land Touch! 2	6.0	Hudson	225	E
Boogie	7.0	Electronic Arts	224	E10+
Brain Challenge	N/A	Ubisoft	225	E
Bratz: Super Babyz	N/A	THQ	226	E
Build-A-Bear Workshop	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E
Cake Mania 2	6.5	Majesco	230	E
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	N/A	Activision	223	T
Chibi-Robo: Park Patrol	8.5	Nintendo	221	E
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	N/A	Disney Interactive	229	E10+
Code Lyoko: Fall of Xana	N/A	The Game Factory	230	E
Commando: Steel Disaster	N/A	XS Games	229	E10+
Contra 4	8.5	Konami	222	T
Corvette Evolution GT	N/A	Jack of All Games	223	E
Cooking Mama 2: Dinner with Friends	7.0	Majesco	223	E
Dementium: The Ward	8.5	Gamecock	223	M
DK Jungle Climber	8.0	Nintendo	221	E
Draglade	7.5	Atlus	224	E10+
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker	8.0	Square Enix	222	E10+
Drawn to Life	7.5	THQ	221	E
Drone Tactics	7.0	Atlus	229	E10+
Dungeon Explorer: Warriors of Ancient Arts	6.5	Hudson	226	T
Dynasty Warriors DS: Fighter's Battle	7.5	Koei	219	E10+
Etrian Odyssey II: Heroes of Lagaard	8.5	Atlus	230	E10+
FIFA 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
• Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates	7.0	Square Enix	226	E10+
Final Fantasy Tactics A2: Grimoire of the Rift	7.0	Square Enix	230	E10+
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings	7.5	Square Enix	223	E10+
Front Mission	6.5	Square Enix	222	E10+
Fullmetal Alchemist Trading Card Game	7.0	Destineer	219	T
Garfield Gets Real	N/A	Destination	223	E
Garfield's Nightmare	7.0	The Game Factory	220	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	N/A	Sierra	222	E
Godzilla Unleashed: Double Smash	3.0	Atari	224	E
The Golden Compass	N/A	Sega	223	E10+
• GRID	8.5	Codemasters	230	E
Hannah Montana: Music Jam	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
Harvest Moon DS Cute	7.5	Natsume	226	E
• Heroes of Mana	6.5	Square Enix	219	E10+
Homie Rollerz	N/A	Destineer	226	E
Impossible Mission	N/A	Codemasters	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Insecticide	6.5	Gamecock	226	E10+
Iron Man	5.0	Sega	229	E10+
Jackass: The Game	N/A	Red Mile Entertainment	225	T
Jake Hunter: Detective Chronicles	5.0	Aksys	229	T
Kung Fu Panda	N/A	Activision	230	E10+
Left Brain, Right Brain	N/A	Majesco	224	E
• The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	9.5	Nintendo	221	E
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	7.5	LucasArts	230	E
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
LifeSigns: Surgical Unit	N/A	Dreamcatcher	223	T
Looney Tunes: Cartoon Conductor	6.5	Eidos	230	E
Looney Tunes: Duck Amuck	3.5	WB Games	221	E
Lost in Blue 3	5.5	Konami	227	E10+
• Luminous Arc	8.0	Atlus	219	T
Madden NFL 08	7.5	Electronic Arts	220	E
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	225	E
Mario Party DS	8.0	Nintendo	223	E
Master of Illusion	N/A	Nintendo	223	E
• Mega Man Star Force	7.5	Capcom	220	E
• Mega Man Star Force 2	7.0	Capcom	230	E
Mega Man ZX Advent	8.5	Capcom	222	E10+
Miami Nights: Singles in the City	N/A	Ubisoft	225	T
Mister Slime	6.0	Southpeak Games	230	E
Monster Jam	N/A	Activision	223	E
MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
My Horse and Me	N/A	Atari	225	E
MySims	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Myst	5.0	Empire Interactive	227	E
Mystery Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer	6.5	Sega	226	E
Namco Museum DS	8.0	Namco Bandai	221	E
• Nanostray 2	6.0	Majesco	225	E
Naruto: Ninja Destiny	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	226	T
Naruto: Path of the Ninja	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	E10+
• Need For Speed ProStreet	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
Nervous Brickdown	7.0	Eidos	219	E
Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword	8.5	Tecmo	227	T
Ninja Reflex	N/A	Electronic Arts	227	E10+
Ontamarama	7.0	Atlus	223	E
Operation: Vietnam	8.0	Majesco	220	T
Orcs & Elves	5.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Panzer Tactics DS	N/A	Conspiracy	223	E10+
Pet Alien	8.0	The Game Factory	219	E
Petz: Bunnyz	N/A	Ubisoft	227	E
Petz Wild Animals: Tigerz	N/A	Ubisoft	227	E
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations	8.5	Capcom	222	T
• Picross DS	8.0	Nintendo	219	E
• Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness	7.5	Nintendo	229	E
• Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Exlporers of Time	7.5	Nintendo	229	E
Prism: Light the Way	8.5	Eidos	219	E
• Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	N/A	Konami	227	E
Professional Fisherman's Tour: Northern Hemisphere	5.0	UFO Interactive	219	E
• Professor Layton and the Curious Village	8.5	Nintendo	225	E
Puppy Palace	N/A	Ubisoft	225	E
Puzzle de Harvest Moon	N/A	Natsume	223	E
• Race Driver: Create & Race	7.5	Codemasters	219	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E10+
• River King: Mystic Valley	7.0	Natsume	225	E
• Rune Factory: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	7.0	Natsume	219	E
Sega Superstars Tennis	8.0	Sega	227	E
The Simpsons Game	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	T
Sonic Rush Adventure	9.0	Sega	221	E
Soul Bubbles	6.5	Eidos	230	E
Space Invaders Extreme	8.0	Square Enix	230	E
Speed Racer	N/A	Warner Bros. Interactive	229	E
Strawberry Shortcake: 4 Seasons Cake	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E
Summon Night: Twin Age	7.5	Atlus	229	E10+
Super Dodgeball Brawlers	6.5	Aksys	229	E
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 3	N/A	Namco Bandai	230	E
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.5	Electronic Arts	221	E
Top Spin 3	6.0	2K Sports	229	E
Touch Detective 2 ½	6.5	Atlus	221	E
• TouchMaster	8.0	Midway	219	E
• Transformers: Autobots	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
• Transformers: Decepticons	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
Ultimate Mortal Kombat	N/A	Midway	223	M
• Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	8.0	THQ	224	T
The Wild West	3.5	Majesco	220	E10+
Wordjong	N/A	Destineer	224	E
• The World Ends With You	9.0	Square Enix	228	T
Worms: Open Warfare 2	7.5	THQ	221	E10+
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	N/A	THQ	222	T
• Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2008	N/A	Konami	224	E
Zoo Tycoon 2 DS	7.0	THQ	226	E



BOOM BLOX

I took a lot of flak from a certain Editor-in-Chief when I predicted good things from Boom Blox, and now he has no choice but to recognize my boundless wisdom. This physics-based puzzler from the mind of Steven Spielberg makes fantastic use of the Wii remote, and though simply playing around in this virtual toy box offers plenty of fun in and of itself, the disc is chock-full of imaginative play modes and addictive mulit-player options. —STEVE T.

SPACE INVADERS EXTREME

Forget what you think you know about Space Invaders. This update takes the same basic alien-blasting premise but kicks it up with flashy effects and nonstop action. It's total trippy fun, even if you don't like the original.

—CHRIS H.

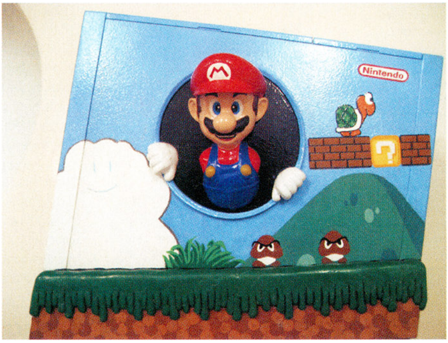
Wii FIT

Much has been made of Wii Fit's aerobics, yoga, and strength training exercises—and rightfully so—but what if you're a lazy slob like me? Miraculously, the game is still a blast. Not enough has been said about the title's just-for-fun balance games, which are the closest we've seen to a new batch of Wii Sports events. Challenging others for top scores gets competitive quick and keeps you coming back for another go. —CHRIS SL.

MOD JOB

It's-a Wii Mario!

A hand-crafted Wii brings it all home.



These days, there's no shortage of digital art. From Photoshop creations to 3-D models, today's most common building blocks are digital 1s and 0s—unless you're Joseph Agrusa.

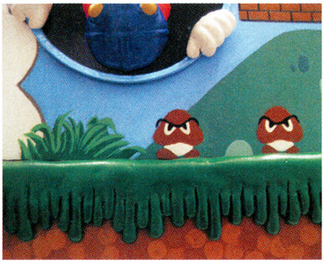
Bringing arts and crafts back in style with a vengeance, Agrusa has crafted the ultimate Wii for Nintendo fans. As you can see from the pictures, this is no simple jewel-encrusting; this is a hand-molded Mario coming out of a Wii, a custom Wii remote holder, and an *extra* USB port. And let's not forget the incredible paint job.

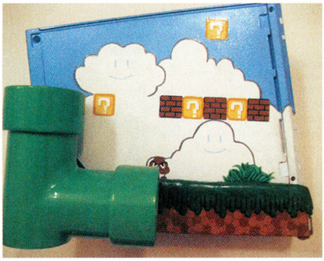
The evidence points to one thing: Agrusa is a huge gamer... right? Wrong. "I love Nintendo, [but] to be honest, I'm not all into video games," he says. "I do play every now and then [though], even on my original NES. The two game systems I own are the previously mentioned NES, which changed the video game world, and Nintendo's Wii, which to me has also changed the gaming world."

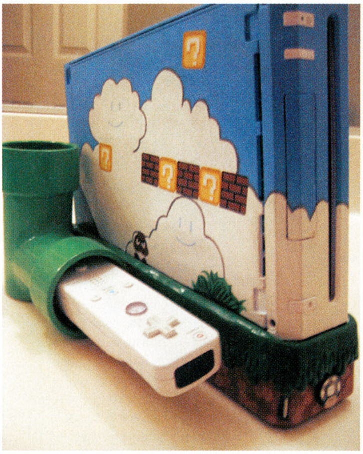
Agrusa's custom Wii made headlines on the internet, and eventually went on eBay to sell for almost $800. As for where that money's going, Agrusa tells us, "I'm using the funds from my Mario Wii to build my current creation, and you'll have to wait to see what it's going to be." With his new project well underway and some serious funds behind it, we can't even imagine.

If you're upset because you lost the custom-Wii eBay auction, don't fret: Agrusa has been kind enough to put a step-by-step guide to his mod online so that anyone can make one. Check it out at http://www.instructables.com/id/Super-Mario-Bros-Inspired-Wii-with-USB-base.

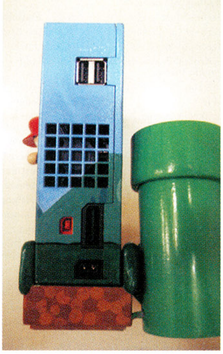
—KAISER H.



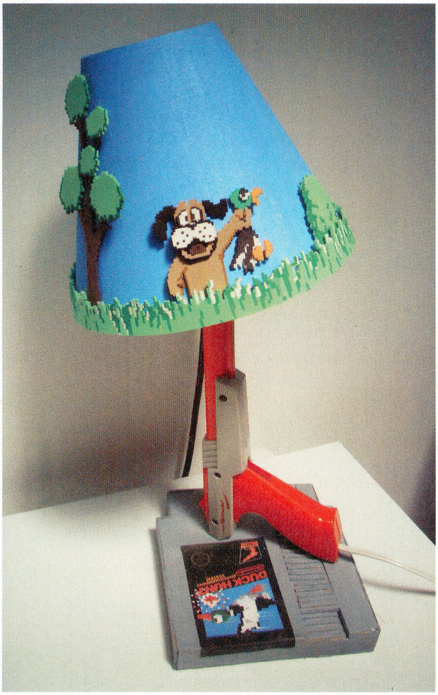




While this Wii is definitely awesome, we don't advocate modding your own console without some professional help. You don't want to break it!



SUPER MARIO BROS.



FANDOM

A Guiding Light

It's not called a light gun for nothing. Take an NES Zapper light gun, throw in some Duck Hunt, and add a dash of complete randomness. What do you get? A Duck Hunt-themed lamp, of course!

Made by Mary P. of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, the birth of this ab-fab lamp was not premeditated. "I was on Craftster (www.craftster.org) one day, minding my own business [and] poking around at other people's crafts, when I noticed there was a challenge coming up," she explains. "The theme was to make a lighting fixture. I thought to myself 'Oh great, I made a lamp for last month's challenge!', and didn't really see myself making another...until I picked up a Zapper, and something went ga-tung! in my mind."

While a lamp is not the first thing that pops in our heads after picking up a Zapper, Mary has lots of experience making Nintendo-related goods for everyday nongaming use: "I do make Nintendo-themed earrings out of polymer clay on occasion: mini NES controllers, Mario enemies and power-ups, the question-mark blocks, and of course, Duck Hunt ducks!"

Mary also has a number of new crafts on the way, from an NES-controller shoulder bag to question-block rear-view mirror danglers, so her adoration for all things Nintendo is clear. "I love the NES games for the whole nostalgia around them all," she says. "The characters are lovable and memorable, and most children of the '80s can relate at least one childhood memory back to the 'original' Nintendo." —KAISER H.

FANDOM

The Art of Stitching

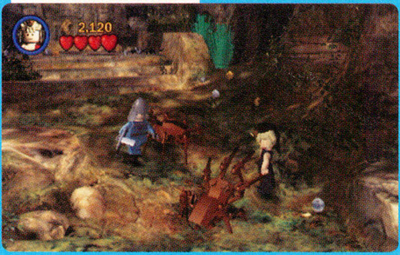
Reader Trollturtle saw some inspirational stitchings in an earlier issue, and he and his mother decided to give it a try. Trollturtle drew the images, and his mother redrew them in pixelated form and stitched them up. Gengar from Pokémon, a Goomba from Mario, and Kirby and Metaknight from the Kirby games round out the lineup. "They aren't my mom's best," he admits. "I guess we both need to improve our skills for a perfect 10." Well, we think they're pretty awesome, and we'd love to see more from you stitchers out there. —TOM H.

WRITE YOUR OWN CAPTION

Screen Test

Remember the console war between Nintendo and Sega way back when? Thanks to Super Smash Bros. Brawl, you can fight it out like it's the early '90s. This month, we throw you the screenshot, you throw your best captions to **screentest@futureus.com.**

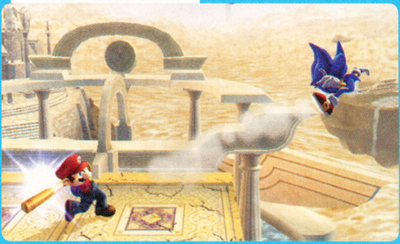
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



Well, at least this is still less over-the-top than the new movie....

HERE'S OUR CAPTION.
Think you can do better?

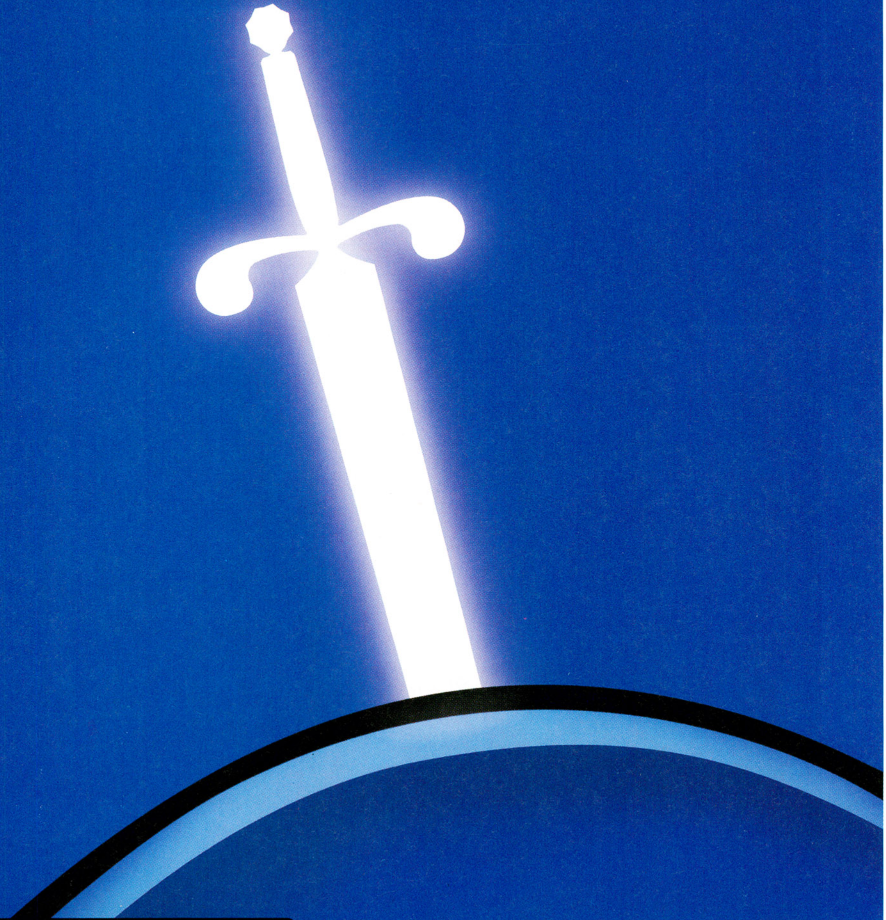
VOLUME 229'S SHOT



"During a heated argument over chili dogs and pasta, Mario snapped." —DIEGO C.

"Although everybody knew Mario was preparing for the upcoming Mario Super Sluggers, few suspected that the plumber practiced his swings in such an...unorthodox way." —IGGYKOOPA

"...and STAY-a off my platforms! I don't-a care WHAT the bosses say!" —E.H.B.



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NEXT MONTH

We'll kick off the next 20 years of Nintendo Power with more big reveals, including a top-secret cover story fit for a king. It's got a lot of heart. Just kidding. It's Mother 3. Just kidding. Please look forward to it.

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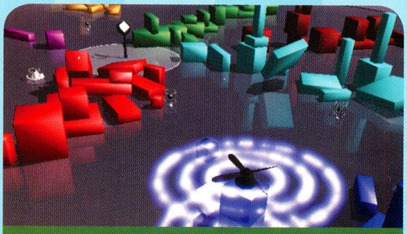

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